THE FARMER'S CHURCH

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THE FARMER'S CHURCH
WARREN H. WILSON

THE FARMER'S CHURCH

BY

WARREN HUGH WILSON, D.D.

"THE CHURCH OF THE OPEN COUNTRY," "THE SECOND MISSIONARY ADVENTURE," "THE EVOLUTION OF THE COUNTRY COMMUNITY," "QUAKER HILL," ETC.

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TO

MARGARET

THE DAUGHTER

OF MY COUNTRY CHURCH

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THE FARMER'S CHURCH

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CHAPTER I

THE FARM

A FARM is a tiny human unit made up of a family resident upon an area of land averaging in the United States about one hundred and forty acres. With each decade it grows smaller. On it a man and his family group create out of the soil products suitable for food, shelter, and clothing for their own use and for sale in markets. The American farm was conceived in the experience of England. There the manor had been for five centuries the prevailing example of domination of the soil by mankind. The farm expresses the independence of our people, their industry, and their creative passion. As the American farm does not pay and, by comparison with other industrial processes productive of large incomes, never has paid, it would seem that the farm is a place of moral and spiritual satisfaction. Those who live on farms to-day, if they have resisted the opportunities of the cities, testify to a joy of life which cities and towns cannot give. They have something of which the popular philosophers do not know.

The component elements of the farm are the house-

hold, the barn, and the outbuildings for the shelter of cattle and poultry, the fields for the "stands" of corn and grain, and the orchard for fruits: these collectively constitute one thing in the world. This chapter is not the place for technical wisdom as to farm-planning, in which the State colleges of agriculture excel: the minister who reads it is concerned with the motives which associate a man with cattle and provide for the woman satisfaction in the care of poultry. He is concerned with the joy of the planting and the harvest; for upon these the wealth of the world depends. Upon them the spiritual structure of the nation is erected. There is more wealth produced from the farms than from all other sources combined. The mines do not yield in metals, nor the sea in food-products, nor the forests in timber, one half as much of wealth as the farms yield to the treasury of the nation. The soil of the State of Georgia is said to produce more in the hands of the farmer than all the mines of precious metals that are worked under our flag. The soil of mountainous Colorado produces ten times as much as the mines of Colorado. Yes, the farmer's industry is explained not by his compensation, which is less than the pay of a miner; but by his spiritual satisfaction, which is like unto that of religion. Even in extent throughout the world, religious people should not forget that at least two thirds and probably three fourths of the persons on earth are engaged in agriculture. In the United States about thirty per cent. of our population live on farms. There is no other industry uniform in its processes that is so extensive or exercises the energies of so many.

Farming is still a poor man's occupation. It is the best way by which a man without estate may come to possess a property of his own. The scholars in agriculture record year by year the rate at which farm hands in the United States become tenants and tenants become owners. The fact that the landless man may come to have a property and the industrious man may at fifty years of age own a title-deed, commends the industry of agriculture to the preacher of personal religion.

The appeal of isolation is but little understood. Prosaic philosophers and teachers who dwell in college towns have assumed that the American would give up the farm generally. They argue this upon the assumption that many contacts and frequent meetings are dear to all men. But some men prefer to live alone. Many of those who go to live in towns would prefer the open country, and some who live in cities long for the quiet of the farm-house, the independence, the slow motions, and the leisurely approach to a task. The tranquillity of the farm, with its sounds that awaken primitive recollections—the sighing of the trees, the crowing of cocks, the bleating of sheep—has a place dear in the minds of those who inherit, as nearly all of us do, the memory of isolation. Farmers study the sky. They know and comment upon the movements of the heavenly bodies and the change of the seasons. All these are shut out from the mind of those who live in cities and tread the paved street under artificial light. There is in many men—I will not say all—something that cannot be satisfied in a crowded place. When we have adjusted ourselves as a nation, it may be found that fully half our people will

desire the lonely life, in order that they may enjoy the sounds of nature and the activities of created things, of which God is the evident Maker. We shall not know in this generation how many there are who love to be alone, but in time the farm will claim its own.

The farmer is by the remoteness of his abode and by his disposition, which idealizes the separate place, aloof from the civic process. He does not fear the policeman and does not live in expectation of the hand on his shoulder. He administers his social life by home-made processes. The law is not his life and breath. Sociology, not civics, is the science that may understand the farmer. Legal science and politics can never penetrate to the control of the reasons for his action. His organizations in the western European countries are generally self-governed. They do not ask the consent of the law and do not await the inspection of uniformed officials. Just as the farmer in the United States behaves without a policeman to prod him, so the coöperator in Finland or Belgium proceeds with his work in no expectation of government help. Even in Prussia before 1914 the farmers had secured in their coöperatives freedom from government interference. The processes of agriculture are open to the influences of religion, but they do not yield easily to the control of law. It is an unsettled question whether lawmakers do the farmer more good than harm. The reason is that the range of utility of law is narrow and the use of executive power is limited in human life; while the activities of the tillers of the soil are on the frontiers of life, and in them a

man must be guided through a variety of processes by his own promptings and by the energies within him.

In saying this, I do not forget that the champions of the farmer are to-day active in promising governmental help to those who till the soil; nor do I ignore the necessary control which cities lay upon the farmer in their own interest, by securing the enactment of laws for the production of pure milk, and for the protection of the consumer from the carelessness or greed of the producer. Most of the process of agriculture is still untouched by law and should continue free. But every act of the man who tills the soil is under the motivation, and may be under the immediate direction, of the religious teacher. The pastor comes much nearer to the keeper of sheep, or to the gardener kneeling between his rows, or to the breeder of cattle, than does the lawgiver.

CHAPTER II

THE FARMER'S CHURCH

IN the first years of this century we heard strange voices from country churches. Before 1890 men had taken the open country for granted. It was as near to us as nature itself. We were used to thinking of life in the terms of country life. Our figures of speech, our standards of thought were those of country people. Our songs and sayings were those which express love of riversides, separate houses in the open fields, and the life of farm animals. Above all, our religious faith expressed itself in rural church forms. It was shocking to be told, about 1892, that in sections of New England farms were abandoned, churches were closed, and moral conditions among country people had fallen out of line with the national spirit. We assured ourselves that these conditions were "local"—with a certain fling of resentment at New England for her well-known airs of moral superiority. And for a decade we forgot it. Yet we did not put the matter out of mind. We had some evidence to confirm it. And the voices of distress continued at intervals to be heard.

Three notable papers were published, about the end of the nineteenth century, to express the writers' sense of rural decay. President William DeWitt Hyde of

Bowdoin College wrote in 1892, for "The Forum," on "Impending Paganism in New England"; the Rev. W. L. Hutchins addressed the Connecticut Bible Society in a memorable way in 1903, and the Rev. Rollin Lynde Hartt wrote, for the "Atlantic Monthly," articles on the "New England Hill Towns" which created a sensation. The strength of these utterances was their portrayal of social decay, including more than decline of church-attendance. The writers appealed to church people, but they drove home the accusation by description of the desolate homes, neglected fields, and degenerate human stock of the towns in which had once lived the best type of American citizens.

The testimony of Mr. Hutchins has every title of respect: it was based upon the observation of many years, during which it had been his business to go from house to house upon an errand that made him watchful of moral conditions; more important still, in its utterance there is a note of sharp pain, as if a constantly confronted horror had burned his soul. His story dwells upon the prevalent ignorance, the inroads of vice, the open contempt of marriage, the increase of idiocy, the feebleness and backwardness of schools, the neglect of the church, the swift lapse into virtual heathenism in whole sections once occupied by the best type of Christian manhood.[1]

These papers awakened a persistent discussion which continued until its culmination in the book, from which we have just quoted,written in 1906 by the Rev. Wilbert

1 "The Country Town," Wilbert L. Anderson. Baker & Taylor Co. 1906.

L. Anderson, a pastor at Amherst, and entitled "The Country Town." This book may be said to have brought to a close the first phase of the discussion.

When this discussion was on, I was pastor of an ideal community in the country north of New York City—historic, rich in wealth, personality, and idealism, and enjoying in a high degree the sincere piety of that time. Then the modern social passion was new-born and the older piety had not yet lost its illusions. We had no foresight of the decay going on in that old community, in which, while the church grew, the society died. It was my privilege to preach also, for the love of it, in a church formerly strong, a full four miles from my own at Quaker Hill. On the last mile of my ride to the church I passed seven houses in succession in each of which dwelt a lonely person, fragment of a broken family: an aged wife in one, her husband in another; a half-mile farther on a divorced man given to drink; two widows in successive houses; an eccentric hermit in a shanty, and a solitary old man.

Just before reaching the church one passed the school where the teacher had, on a day of good attendance, four pupils. But at the church on a fair day I confronted fifty men on one side of the house and as many women on the other. We had to build new horse-sheds to accommodate the driving-animals during the sermon. Yet the broken homes and the empty school-house told the story of the community's decay. Now the school-house has long been closed; its windows are broken, its door off the hinges. The church is kept in repair but never opened and the road itself is almost

closed, choked by the bushes on each side which brush the passing vehicle.

The social forces which shattered family unity, made women childless, and drove some to suicide, have in a quarter of a century emptied all but nine of the thirty-eight houses which were tributary to that congregation. Five structures have gone down, five have for as many years had no tenants, and twenty are the summer homes of "city people." Last winter the great snow crushed one long horse-shed; the summer sun and wind have stripped from the other the shingles nailed on with such mirth at the "bee," and between them stands the church, with locked door and closed blinds. An aged man used for years to cut the grass before its door, but he has died. The same forces have triumphed over the religious unity of Quaker Hill.[2] For thirty years it was a "one-church community," and now a preacher is there only for the summer, to dwell in the manse and preach to a dozen summer people in the church where in winter their first pastor tried new sermons upon the devout attention of a hundred. The heart cries out at this decay of a community stricken with incurable ills. For in the first chapter of country life in the United States the church was the register of social and economic confusion. Its ministers were prophets of the agrarian revival. The bad repair of its meeting-houses and the dispersal of its congregations were the earliest storm-signals of the farmer's distress which the nation heeded.

2 "Quaker Hill, a Sociological Study," Warren H. Wilson. Privately printed.

Then came the administration of Theodore Roosevelt as President. He was an American indeed, who looked backward and forward. In his last year he gave the nation The Country Life Commission Report.[3] At once the case of the farmer became a national concern. What had before been an academic question was on the front page of the daily papers. The agricultural press, which had ignored the New England degeneracy, poured scorn upon the President's commission with its assertion of common interest on the part of farmers, teachers, and ministers. The United States Senate printed the report as a document with a number, but, as if ashamed of this routine act, Congress refused attention to recommendations of the report. The commission has never been discharged. The matter has gone out of the hands of Congress. That report was addressed, as so much of Mr. Roosevelt's work, to the people of this country rather than to Congress alone.

Indeed, the first response, so far as known to the present writer, was from the Presbyterian Church, by which he was employed at that time as a sociological specialist. In May of 1909, three months after the Roosevelt report appeared, a series of Country Church Conferences was projected by Charles Stelzle, which carried the discussion of the rural situation through the center of the States of Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Nebraska. We got such eager response from church superintendents, pastors, and educators that the Board of Home Missions

[3] "The Country Life Commission Report." Sturgis & Walton Co., publishers.

felt called on to pursue further the interest in the country church; and I was delegated to the task, at first informally, but in a year quite definitely, as Superintendent of Church and Country Life. The event was not without humor, as illustrating the way "experts" are made. I had been a city pastor, called into national service because of my interest and zeal for the benefit the church could render to workingmen. Seized upon in this new drive for the farmer's church, I have not been permitted from that day to this to speak or write about anything but the country church. The church people had to have an agent who could release the dammed-up volume of talk they had in them, and they "specialized" me with a vengeance. I have been well content except when antagonism between city and country has got the floor. The rural situation is a national one and owes much to the city leaders and thinkers. It has as good right to the use of city facilities and city experience as has any other national problem. Like railroading, or education, or poverty, it claims access to the resources of the whole country in its times of need. Its solution cannot be accomplished, I am sure, without the leadership of the city churches.

Among the surprises of the early day was the intelligent and eager interest in the churches, manifested by the teachers and scientific thinkers employed by the Department of Agriculture and by the agricultural colleges. For five years we just talked, discussed, or propagandized; and everywhere I met two classes of men who had equal zeal for a revival of the country church; they were the deans of agriculture and the

supervisors of churches. The latter came into the conferences regardless of their denomination. The former displayed an interest made up of blended piety and sentiment, stirred by a scientific interest in the church as an essential social institution without whose help their agrarian reconstruction could not be accomplished. Most of these scientists of agriculture were religious men, but they helped the church discuss its case regardless of their allegiance to Catholic or Protestant faith. Some of the men with whom for ten years I found myself associated most frequently on church and college platforms, were devout Catholics. They invited me to their meetings for farmers and I solicited their presence periodically at meetings in which knowledge of their denominational connection would at times have chilled their welcome. But we all saw that a great national change was at hand, for which the churches should provide sanctions.

Almost as interested were the educators employed in superintendence of public schools, of whom for many years Philander P. Claxton was the official leader as Commissioner of Education. They too were Christian men, as a rule. They discerned the common interest of the church and school in the country. They were advocating a national educational reform, in obedience to a national spirit. The great report issued by President Roosevelt had commanded them also to set about the teaching of better living in the country. They also sought wisdom for the task from the popular discussion of it with thinking men and women in the

small town and the city. They looked as we did for the farmer to take possession of his institutions and make them his own. We agreed in believing that the aroused and angry farmer would not prosper economically, nor win political victory that would last, until he had schools and churches capable of registering his culture and transmitting it from one generation to the next.

But the talk was without substance. Country people evidently lacked accurate knowledge regarding their education and their religion. Assertions were made and repeated but never verified. Contradiction was equally weak because it lacked support. There was no body of knowledge of rural social life. Indeed, there was at that time no knowledge of the economic life of farmers and villagers to which discussion could go and claim a settlement of disputes. Therefore the administration of church work was dogmatical, assertive, and inconclusive. It was for this reason that Dean Liberty Hyde Bailey [4] had been advocating for years the survey and measurement of country interests. He desired to have a body of knowledge about the economic and social life of farmers, such as other professions already had, upon which the teacher and administrator could base his assertions and his policies.

Therefore we began, one year after the first country-life conferences were held by the Presbyterian Board, to survey the churches of given areas; first in Pennsylvania about Huntington, then in Illinois about Spring-

[4] "The State and the Farmer," Liberty Hyde Bailey. Macmillan. 1911. Pp. 81–84.

field and Decatur.[5] It is interesting to record the disposition there was at that time in the hearts of churchmen to study the actual situation. These surveys were made, as is our custom, upon the request of the local "church court," which in my church is called a presbytery. But when after three months the findings as to the condition of country churches were presented to the meeting of this body, they were received with studied indifference. Or better, with excited interest and prompt neglect. But the interest was more than local. Men saw that here was a matter of national, not local concern. Other regions bespoke surveys of their country churches. The

[5] A Rural Survey in Pennsylvania. Presbyterian Board of Home Missions. New York, 1910–15. Also the following:

A Rural Survey in Illinois.
" " " " Arkansas.
" " " of Marin and Sonoma Counties, California.
" " " " Tulare County, California.
" " " " Indiana.
" " " " Kentucky.
" " " " Maryland.

A Canvass of Religious Life and Work in Redwood County, Minnesota.

A Rural Survey in Missouri.

Ohio Rural Life Survey, Greene and Clermont Counties.
" " " " Northeastern Ohio.
" " " " Southeastern Ohio.
" " " " Southwestern Ohio.
" " " " Church Growth and Decline in Ohio.
" " " " Country Churches of Distinction.

A Rural Survey of Lane County, Oregon.
" " " in Pennsylvania.
" " " " Tennessee.

Rev. C. O. Gill [6] was at the same time surveying a county in Vermont, under the sponsorship of Gifford Pinchot, who was a member of Mr. Roosevelt's commission. He followed a purely ecclesiastical clue at that time, which he later pursued into economic and social fields in his Ohio survey. Our Presbyterian contribution was poured out in a series of pamphlets which recorded the social and economic structure of the country communities of the States named and of Indiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Oregon, and California. It culminated in the Ohio Rural Life Survey which was published in 1910 and 1911, showing the conditions of country living in thirty-nine of the eighty-eight counties of Ohio. Mr. Gill took up this survey where we left off and recorded the church and social facts of every parish in Ohio, in his book "Six Thousand Country Churches" [7] which made of the Buckeye State a demonstration of the country church in the United States. These studies were novel and sensational in the interest they elicited. "They read like a novel," said a Brooklyn pastor. In Ohio a Federation of Churches and an annual School for Pastors are now engaged upon the teaching and administration of rural churches in the light of the body of knowledge in their possession.

The survey of country churches was too big a matter to be accomplished by one denomination. After the World War the Interchurch World Movement undertook it; and following its collapse the Committee on

[6] "The Country Church," C. O. Gill and Gifford Pinchot. Macmillan. 1919.

[7] "Six Thousand Country Churches," C. O. Gill. Macmillan. 1920.

Social and Religious Surveys, "organized to salvage the materials" of the Interchurch, completed the nation-wide study of the church in its economic and social setting and is publishing the result, in a series of volumes. It uses the methods first employed in the Pennsylvania survey, but brought down to date and supplemented with the devices of Professors Galpin and Kolb for recording community boundaries.[8]

All these measurements of religious process add little to what the experienced superintendent of church work has long known. But they are of use in the enlistment of a new type of mind in religious work. It is surely worth while to engage the powers of analysis of Hermann N. Morse and the genius for organization of Edmund de S. Brunner upon national church interests such as concern every congregation in the country, from the Catholic parish to the Pentecostal meeting in the schoolhouse. Besides, they have given to country religious interests a statement that can be understood by all, and that will be read by a wider circle than that of the presiding elders of American churches.

The story of the country-church movement is completed by the record of the appointment, by several denominations, of country-church specialists. The Presbyterian, Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Congregationalist, Reformed, Disciples, Southern Methodist, and finally the Roman Catholic and Protestant Episcopal, have appointed superintendents or directors of their work on

[8] "The Social Anatomy of a Rural Community," C. J. Galpin. University of Wisconsin Research Bulletin No. 34. "Rural Primary Groups," Kolb. Research Bulletin No. 51. Agr. Exper. Station, Madison, Wis.

behalf of their rural congregations. These men, except the Baptist and Methodist Episcopal, are still in service. They are selected for their educational rather than their preaching experience, and three of them were called out of educational work. The appointment of denominational agents to safeguard the churches in the country had, for some observers, a sinister look; it was said to be a step backward. The discussion prior to the making of surveys brought out that the chief trouble with country churches was their denominationalism. Why accentuate it by the assignment of one promoter to each sect that maintains country churches? There is truth in this objection. Church people are still too prone to take comfort to themselves in seeing among the leaders of their church work a Director of Country Church Work; they too easily believe that such an officer assures the enactment of a wise policy of administration. Denominational specialists in this field, as in any other, may become only additional overhead officers. Furthermore, it is in the nature of denominationalism to muffle any sounds of criticism that its own members make, by confining the discussion to its own precincts. Protestant sects are essentially public. They deal with matters in the community. As soon as they confine an interest to their own precinct they have killed it, because they have denied its access to the general public. There is therefore in the appointment of half a score of secretaries of country churches by the denominations chiefly concerned, a reaction characteristic of the sectarian spirit. As soon as the country-church interest became general each sect wanted to have a representation.

Yet it must be said that these men, because of their connections with scholars and their respect for the university opinion, have kept themselves free from sectarian bias. Not one has yet been appointed who could be called a church politician. None of them has so far used his office for sectarian interest. On the contrary, they have maintained close coöperation and sympathy in the study and promotion of community programs. They have solidly supported the survey and report of rural church work, out of which has come a body of knowledge of the highest value. They have, each in his own denomination, held up the standard of subsistence for country churches—which are the same in all divisions of Christendom. It may be questioned whether any better way could have been devised at the present time for the leavening of the various sects with the doctrine which will be presented in this book. For without exception these men agree upon a religious program for the country church, the elements of which program are the same in all communions. This religious program binds the people together.

It would be too much to say that the country churches will reunite Christendom, but it may be that by means of this country-church program we shall save the Christian religion from extinction at that point at which sectarianism threatens to destroy it. For in the country community Protestantism has not the room for differentiation it has in the growing cities. Three churches in a hamlet of one hundred people, or five in a village of a thousand, do effectively shut Christ out. The

country-church program of all denominations rebukes and ends this delusion.

The most of the organization thus far described was perfected before 1920. In the past five years we have had opportunity to try our theories, discuss experiments, demonstrate our principles. There has been time also for the publication of the surveys made. The organized country-church departments, which were each at first opposed, have been let alone by church conservatives for a while, and they should have by this time something to report. They have, indeed, made measurable gains, chiefly in the direction of adapting the church to its community; of this details will come later. It is of greater importance to record here that we seem to be approaching the end of the period in which these specialists have served their time and rejoiced in their vision.

They have indeed rejoiced. Welcomed by acclaim of scholars, intellectuals, special workers in agriculture, health, play, social science; admitted to the university class room and to the college platform, heard with interest by learned societies, the country-church "expert" has with difficulty maintained his humility. He has known only too well that his materials are commonplace, his assertions and his program moderate and unsensational, his goal hidden even from his own eyes. Yet he has been swept into public notice and newspapers have welcomed his addresses, cherished his photograph, and attended his conferences with the eyes and ears and poised pencil of the reporter. Why all this public

acclaim for the country church? Why the seat at the guest table, the chair at the center of the platform? Why the same phrases from the introducing officer, in every State from Connecticut to California?

And after the acclaim the present quiet days. But even in the diminished public interest of this year, 1925, the place of the country church is assured in public interest. An eye that never sleeps watches it and awaits the development of its future. The "movement" of the past thirty years has called into the service of country churches a personnel who are enlisted for life. Some were there before, but they have now a voice and a meaning that give value to what they would have attempted. New men have moved into rural manses with the purpose of working five years, studying one year in a university, and then returning to the farmer's church. Books have appeared, to record the names and attainments of these men. They are seeing light on their prosaic task. A country ministry is appearing such as our fathers did not know of, a generation who will be the prophets of new religious leadership and thought.

Yet this new religious feeling and consecration speak with no power of command. There is much writing indeed, but it is of the precise, dull prosaic kind that will convert no one; it is of the text-book order. We need a great voice to arouse and awaken us. A poet or a preacher is required, who can make the present generation believe in the life of country people, who can sing the beauty of the process of creation and shout the call to holy living on the land. It may be that he

will be a priest to toll the bell for worship and quiet the souls of our people with the calm of God that lies on smiling fields. It may be a mystic prophet who will stir men with awe of the spirit that moves over the tree-tops of the woods between farm-houses. He will surely come. And he will be as much greater than the men who have prepared for him as the Master was greater than the Forerunner.

The expectant period of the faith of farmers is embodied in two devoted men, who have lived, served, yet not attained. They are Matthew Brown McNutt and Charles M. McConnell. Each has served in a country church to which the whole nation looked; each has withdrawn from the service, baffled but undiscouraged; each is hopeful, and ready for events that are delayed. Mr. McNutt undertook in 1900 the pastorate of a church [9] of the old type among a sturdy Illinois population who have produced more than one beginning in the agrarian revival. In DuPage County, Illinois, the Town and Country Young Men's Christian Association was born in 1873 under the leadership of Robert Weidensall; and near at hand O. J. Kern began his work which country school-teachers cherished in the volume "Among Country Schools." McNutt took his wife into the country near Plainfield and extended from the manse where they lived the service of the gospel his predecessors had only preached—a ministry of music, recreation, and joy. At the end of ten quiet years he had united his people in a congregation capable of erecting a build-

[9] "Modern Methods in the Country Church," M. B. McNutt. Presbyterian Board of Home Missions. New York.

ing suitable to modern use. It was built without help of city or national funds, though the congregation had the right to Chicago coöperation and national subsidy. Sister churches in Chicago ignored McNutt's modest plea for aid, and he did not ask Home Missions aid. The DuPage building was dedicated free of debt.

The story of Mr. McNutt's pastorate, told for the first time casually, at a late hour, at a banquet of Chicago churchmen who were assembled to welcome a prominent city pastor, electrified the men who heard it. Probably no one else was so surprised as the speaker himself. "We carried McNutt around the hall on our shoulders," said one minister who was present. The ovation he then received was but a prelude to the journalistic welcome extended to him. He was asked to write for farm journals, educational weeklies, sociological organs; and to speak upon platforms before which were assembled audiences to amaze and delight any teacher. Within a year he found himself spending more than half his time in travel and public propaganda. He steadfastly refused flattering offers to withdraw from the pastorate and go on the lecture or teaching platform.

But in the end, after three years of futile struggle to harmonize his new work with the old, Mr. McNutt accepted appointment of his own church and began a decade of public speaking. Everywhere he went, telling the story of his pastorate at DuPage. He added a course of lectures for longer engagements; but his hearers demanded of him persistently that he repeat to them what he had seen with his own eyes and done

with his hands among the farmers of the black lands of Illinois. He became the advocate of the country parson, and the embodiment in himself of the joy and the triumph of the country church. Other men's experience, of discouragements he had lightened and victories he had witnessed, became part of his tale. He broadened and deepened his philosophy as he saw the working of forces before unknown to him or to other pastors. He enriched his understanding of the particular—about which he was always speaking—by his insight into general conditions and into social-economic forces that attack the church. Mr. McNutt retired in 1922 to his farm at Wooster, Ohio.

C. M. McConnell began in a country church in the days when it was supposed to be a stepping-stone to a city charge. And in due time he stepped up "to a larger work in a city." But he was not contented there. In 1914 he demanded and was given service in the country, at Lakeville, Ohio, as a "demonstration pastor." Here for years he maintained a church to which attention was directed by church officials as a model enterprise. McConnell was supported effectively as a public speaker with an adequate income and assistants to supplement his activities, provided by one of the national boards of his church, while he tried out methods and adapted measures to the needs of country people about which he could talk in his public addresses. Equipped with a passionate love of the country and a penetrating sympathy for common folk, he became a great influence in his own and other churches and a popular speaker at farm meetings, a stimulating and

provocative teacher. For the past two years Mr. McConnell has been in service of enlistment under the board that so long maintained him in rural Ohio. He has given up his "demonstration" for administrative services; but he, like McNutt, awaits with eagerness and conviction the outcome of the conflict in which he was there engaged.

Both these men have been denied the privilege of seeing their dreams come true. What they did in the small place is still being done in particular places by others, but it has not become the rule. The work they set themselves to do was so complex a task and the imitations they set going were on so vast a scale that they must needs suffer disappointment. For a time they had to withdraw. But their experiences may serve as measure of the whole movement. They were not theorists who could retreat upon general principles. They tried to practise a new religious philosophy upon an old mentality. They sewed a new piece on an old garment. They put new wine in old bottles. They had to stop. They were consistent enough to stop short. One has no reason to believe that having seen the reality they have lost faith. Rather, they have kept their faith.

One development of the country-life movement of the past thirty years has been the type of church which has taken to itself the term "community church." This term, overworked of late, is no more theirs who use it than it is the property of other churches; but they are sorely in need of a garment to clothe themselves withal, and they cling to this term as a symbol of common experience. They prize it the more because they differ

widely in kind. Yet they probably owe their place in public attention and their eagerness to tell one another about themselves, to the same causes which led to the employment of country-church specialists by ten denominations. It may be that their protest against denominational exploitation of the country churches has driven them to desire a communion with one another. They defend themselves behind the term "community church." They have found a champion in David R. Piper of Excelsior Springs, Missouri; who has enumerated them and found their number to be 713 in June, 1923.[10] Of these he found only 103 to be denominational. The greater number he declares to be outside sectarian connection or affiliation, being organized for the service of social communities, without religious prejudice.

This is a very significant religious event. It goes out to the whole country, being naturally less extended in the South. It expresses a passionate conviction and a revolt of consecrated men against situations which could in no other way be solved. Inasmuch as these churches, whose only attachment is local, are conventional in their liturgy and imitate the ways of the ordinary Protestant church in everything except administrative polity, they may be enumerated as an expression of the same forces as are at work in the denominations. They practise the "programs" that are advocated in the very denominations from which they have withdrawn, so far as these schemes of activity have to do with local and neighborhood interests. They secure freedom from the super-

[10] See the "Unity Messenger," published at Butler, Indiana.

vision of the superintendent and the bishop. They can do as they please in their contributions to missionary causes. They carry out the country-life program in the advocacy of which the leading denominations have united.

Taken together with the number of churches of similar type and purpose in denominational connection, these churches which have only the name of "community" to distinguish them, constitute a considerable advance. Their dispersion throughout the land indicates a general interest among Americans in the usefulness of religion. This is indeed new. Our religion has never before been dominated by utility. Previous generations declared their convictions to be true. They determined their communion with others by common opinion, by obedience to common authority, by allegiance to common masters of the spirit. These churches put supreme above all other binding-ties the one principle of utility. They make the church to serve.

It is probably not enough to make a new religious sect of, nor is it wholly original. It is prosaic enough and characteristic of agrarian minds, the minds of Americans, who are practical people. But it seems to be the present point of arrest. There we stand. What will not work, we leave out. What is of use we retain and practise. If only the country churches could be awakened to what is beautiful in the teaching of Christ! If then they could dare to face again the truth and to make the sacrifices truth requires! But that may come later.

CHAPTER III

HAS IT A FUTURE?

THE urban population residing outside incorporated places of 2500 or over, has increased in the past forty years in the United States from 28.6 per cent. to 51.4 per cent. of the total population. The urban growth has affected the communities of more than 8000 population, which may more properly be called cities, more than towns and villages of less than 8000, which are generally dependent upon agriculture. Their increase in the forty-year period has been from 285 in number, constituting 22.7 per cent. of the total population, to 924 places with 43.8 per cent. of the total population. In other words, the number of people living in places of 8000 population or over has increased from 11,365,698 in 1880 to 46,307,640 in 1920. Communities of less than 8000 population are regarded in this book as rural. They contain more than 56 per cent. of the population of the country.

The transformation of the ideals of the nation from rural to urban has been even greater than the shifting of the population from country to city. The second generation of urban Americans is accustomed to the ideas of a culture that lives by machinery and has forgotten that production is initially a matter of

growth. Children who have gone through the public schools of a great city and have been employed by city firms have a clerical and mechanical turn of mind. They do not know what the country is. During youth and middle age they never reflect upon the reasons for life in the country. The American of thirty-five is now a sort to admire all machinery and despise all vegetation. In time this may be remedied by reason of the mechanical penetration of the country in motor trips and summer vacations; at present the motorists are a scourge to the country-side. They ravage farmers' fields, take what they please, camp in inviting spots, and leave the grassy place of their sojourn polluted with waste, or the timber lot endangered by a smoldering fire. To them the open country is abandoned now and owned by nobody.

The opinion of clerks and mechanics about the future of the country is all adverse. They "know only what they read in the papers"—as the humorists Finley Peter Dunne and Will Rogers admit on their behalf—and the daily papers are published too rapidly to catch the rhythm of farm life. Life among beasts and crops is "slow" to them. The antennæ of their radio are not tuned to catch the wave-lengths of the country, so that its messages do not reach them. Swift speech is theirs and instant reply, with no hesitation, no reflection. They cannot converse with the slow-spoken, meditative farmer.

Another cause of doubt concerning the future of the country church is discovered in the minds of farm-owners who moved to cities and towns during the past

thirty years. They sold their farms or rented them to their hands. These men have sometimes curious convictions that there is nobody living in the country who would be interested in a church. Town-dwelling farmers look out upon the lands, once their homes, which now are scarcely less populous, with a social generalization to the effect that life there is at an end. Is it economic conviction? Far from it! They collect rents from the dwellers on their old farms. They buy and sell those very lands under the toiling feet of the present tillers of the soil. But for them the structure of rural society is transferred to the town because so many of them and their kindred are dwelling in town.

A curious feature of "Main Street" was the inability of its author to discern the agrarian basis of the society he described. For all he said of it, Gopher Prairie might have been a town of traders in oil or coal or lumber or fish. Yet the economic processes which explain the existence of "Main Street" are those of an agricultural people. The dignity and worth which Sinclair Lewis failed to discover were such as farmers know. If the book had been a description of the farmers, whom "Main Street" exploits, it would have voiced something besides a bitter cry of futility. Seeing and hearing only the urban things, the writer well expresses the irreligious temper and opportunist spirit of the second generation of sons of the American farm.

Then the country has suffered from the fact that daily newspapers are published only in cities. They are read everywhere. They give expression to what a

day in the immediate surroundings of their cities may bring forth. Their writers are city persons. So far, therefore, as this influence goes, they create the illusion of the sufficiency and finality of the city.

Another force that has to do with the creating of an opinion that the farmer's way of life is at an end, is the extensive development of power. Within a century and a half steam power has changed the whole process of manufacture. It has made profitable large-scale production in factories and has rendered household industries unprofitable. Within a half-century electric power has developed and extended the conquest of industries begun by steam, until all phases of production are affected. Within the past twenty-five years gasolene power has extended the facilities for transportation. It has been applied to the work that the horse did in the past. So overwhelming has been its effect that the highways have been rebuilt at enormous expense for the purpose of swift, easy travel between cities and towns. The driving-horse has in the past decade almost disappeared.

A later form of motor transportation has put out of business the ox and threatens even the place held by the heavy farm horse. Tractors have come into the fields of the farm to do the work of the horse and the mule and the ox, leaving, as some think, very little place for draft animals. Granted that this swift extension of power in transportation may have overrun its proper boundaries, it still is true that a great transformation has been wrought before the face of the farming population, and the question is raised whether

farming itself, a household industry, will follow cotton-spinning, weaving, lace-making, into a factory form, highly capitalized and centrally controlled. But thus far, by the application of power to agriculture the separate farm family has been established upon the homestead. The big bonanza farms have been cut up into small family farms in the very years in which the steel industry and the oil industry were being concentrated in the control of two great "trusts." The telephone, automobile, and radio are friends of the family farm, not its enemies. Yet the spectacle of steam and electricity has so fascinated the beholder that all Americans inertly await the devouring of the family farm by Capital and Power.

In 1912 a college president in Ohio took me home to dine, to tell me that the day of the farm was done, that the way to organize agriculture was discovered by an Ohio match-manufacturer at Akron. This gentleman had purchased a series of contiguous farms and employed their former owners and others as specialists. One was to care for cows, another for orchard trees, another for poultry. The whole was to be a revolutionary success. It was to be profitable. It was to introduce a new age. At the death of the owner ten years later, this experimental estate was so little successful that it had to be endowed. Alas for the farm that pays no profit! The neighbors of the theorist who have no millions to endow their experiments,—and every farm is a venture,—are indeed complaining of their poverty; but they are paying expenses, while his specialized estate shows a deficit. Other capitalists

have not imitated the example set. Recently Mr. Henry Ford, who makes a success of all things round, like wheels or dollars, has freely predicted that the day of the lonely farm is at an end, for he has planned a better way! Mr. Ford has indeed served the farmer greatly, but in the way of providing him a swift and handy chariot, "that will go anywhere and back again," and by devising a small tractor for the small farmer to plow with and sow with, and to fill his silo. But he is not aware of the preference which makes a man a farmer. Industrial magnates see only what can be done with measurable power. They fail to see the greater social and spiritual passions which make men till lonely acres. Yet so great is their popularity that the farmer assents to their utterances and thinks the way of smoky, noisy cities is the better way. For lack of prophetic voices in the English language, in the United States, our people who love the land are in this generation half ashamed of their ideals.

However, although in the sections suited to the use of machinery the rural population has decreased, no part of the United States has been depopulated. The prediction that was made sixteen years ago, when the Country Life Commission held hearings in Illinois, that "all the farmers would soon move to town," has not been fulfilled. In fact, the farms in that section, though fewer in number, are as productive as ever. Their ownership is generally in the same hands or in those of their kindred, and their products are sold for thrice the return of 1908. In Eastern States there were "abandoned farms" at the end of the century, but

these discarded acres were incidental to a shift in population and a readjustment of the land to a new economic process. Second-rate land was returning to pasture. Families were leaving the country because their outworn methods could not support them there. And the "abandoned farms" which were not annexed to neighboring acres were eagerly bought, as soon as the tidings of their vacancy had gone forth, by city dwellers or immigrants with a competency to be invested in a home.

Meantime, the regions of poor soil, where machinery could not be profitably used, show a rural population steadily increasing. The southern Appalachian region, studied by Mr. John C. Campbell in 1916, shows an increase, in the 230 mountain counties studied, of 18.1 per cent. as against 11.5 per cent. in the non-mountain region. So the country people exhibit their vitality. In the sections suited to general use of farm machinery, intensified production brought increased gain in the past two decades. In the inferior lands, population increased. In the face, therefore, of the idealization of the city and of the machine, strong forces are at work to continue the rural population.

And now a new agrarian ideal is given voice in the country. The war years, 1914–18, followed a period of extensive national agitation. During the war American farmers increased their production in response to the stimuli of patriotism and a natural desire for profit. After the war farmers were not willing again to be supine while others marched over them, so they be-

gan a twofold movement. Coöperatives, which had been growing before, appeared in increasing number, and political organizations appeared whose representatives in the legislatures, state and national, were glad to be called "farm blocs" and to dictate "relief for the farmer."

The coöperative movement is solid and permanent, the legislative struggle to relieve the farmer is probably no more than the expression of a new ideal and an historic aspiration; yet of the two it is the better illustration of our present contention. For it shows how the people are aroused and convinced of the distress of the farm population and the prime importance of the agricultural industry. If it were not for this general conviction, the revolutionary legislation in the interest of country people could not have been enacted. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914, the Federal Vocational Act of 1920 known as the Smith-Hughes Act, and the Sterling-Towner Bill, allowed to die in the Sixty-seventh Congress, reintroduced as the Sterling-Reed Bill in the Sixty-eighth, are all products of national convictions. We believe that the farming industry has permanent form in the farm family, and that the future of rural institutions is assured. The work of the churches should be adjusted to that conviction.

In the post-war period books have appeared which evidence the same conviction. Notable among these are novels of Willa Cather, whose "One of Ours" was a prize novel of 1923. The poems of Robert Frost are country lyrics whose many readers discern through them the spiritual motives of country people. Just so our

grandsires who were farmers saw their own play of spirit in Lowell. Even the contempt of the realists Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson for the small town is consistent with the farmer's low estimate of townspeople. But the literature of western Europe is the most abundant in expression of the new agrarianism of the spirit. Hamsun's "Growth of the Soil," Nexö's "Pelle" and "Ditte," and the writings of the Irish school—Russell, Synge, Colum, Yeats—are all like the sound of a new music in the human ears. From Canada came the sweet melody of Louis Hémon's "Maria Chapdelaine," to be read in cities by men who have never learned to drive a horse or to chop down a tree.

The example of the peoples of western Europe, among whom our churches mostly had their origins, is all on the side of permanence of the farm population with the institutions peculiar to it. There the churches are usually in the villages, which are many; because farming centered in villages until after the Reformation.

The farmers everywhere require churches, as they require banks, of their own. Reluctantly we are obliged to admit in the United States that each class of the population needs its own institutions. It took us a long time to recognize the farmer's need of banks suited to the industry of agriculture. We now have the Federal Farm Loan bank system, grudgingly allowed to the farmers, who themselves did not discern at first their need of it. It was not a political concession only, but a sociological necessity. In the same way we need country churches in a class by themselves because a great rural population requires its own peculiar institutions.

It has become evident that the people in the country require schools suited to their peculiar needs. We have begun to organize them with a zeal even greater than our knowledge, as experience of mankind offers few examples of education adjusted to the needs of the productive and depressed classes. The country church is going to be as slow in emerging as is the country school. It will be as grudgingly allowed as was the farmer's bank. But a church adjusted to the needs of farmers is bound to come, because mankind depends upon the farming class, as an organized section of the population with its own institutions.

The future of a church peculiar to farmers appears probable, because of the churches invented out of hand by farmers in those sections in which the older denominations have retreated to the town and the city. Throughout southern Ohio, where once were organized extensively the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches, and where now many of these congregations have closed their doors, a new type of church has appeared, usually calling itself by some name indicating holiness or perfection. Its members desire to be pure, untouched, spotless from the world. They are come-outers. They secede from other denominations and comfort themselves with their likeness to none, their superiority over all. In this they express the fault of the rural mind, unchastened and unrebuked by the experiences of mankind.

These seceders from Christian fellowship are usually ecstatic and emotional while their enthusiasm lasts. Frequently they are noisy and excited in their expressions, and sometimes they deliberately excite them-

selves, as dervishes do, in the hope of attaining an ecstasy of joy. It need hardly be said that generally they are lacking in leadership, inexperienced in the Christian tradition, and, so far as reading history goes, quite illiterate. Their "churches" seldom last more than two or three years, and very often they disappear entirely. I have been able to find only a scanty register of these extensive movements of "holiness" throughout the United States. It can hardly be said that they have added a new denomination, although they denounce the old. Their very existence seems to me to testify to the necessity of a country church that expresses the religious life peculiar to farmers.

In the face of these facts, it is very discouraging to report the arrest or decadence of country churches. Religious institutions connected directly or indirectly with the farmer are in the majority of instances on the decline. Protestant as well as Catholic, Methodists highly organized as well as Baptists independent, they are losing ground except in sections of increasing population or among those populations which reinforce religion with racial tenacity and the use of a foreign language. The figures[1] of the decay of the country church are given by the Institute of Survey and Religious Research as follows. Of all the churches studied, a little less than six out of ten were found to be growing. In the colonial region less than half were found to be growing. For the country as a whole, half the churches made an annual

[1] "The Town and Country Church in the United States," Morse and Brunner. Doran. New York, 1923. Pp. 41, 42, 96. And "Diagnosing the Rural Church," Fry. Doran. 1924. Pp. 163–181.

gain of less than 10 per cent. Less than 20 per cent. of the Protestant rural population of the country are active church members.

The total number of town and country churches is 101,477. Of these, 5.6 per cent. are located in towns; 30.7 per cent. in villages; 63.7 per cent. in hamlets or in the open country. . . . Approximately one-seventh of all the town and country communities, including 9 per cent. of the town and country population, are without Protestant churches. There are 33,808 other communities, or 42 per cent. of the total number, that have churches but do not have within them any resident pastors. There are 16,258 other communities that have both churches and resident pastors, but which do not have in them any full-time resident pastors. Thus only 21 per cent. of all the communities, including 28 per cent. of all the town and country population, do have within their borders churches with full-time resident pastors.

The total membership of all town and country churches is 8,969,603, or 16 per cent. of the total town and country population. Seventy-one and three-tenths per cent. of these are classified as active resident members, that is, more than one-fourth are either non-resident or non-active. Eleven and five-tenths per cent. of those making up this membership are attached to town churches; 38.8 per cent. to village churches and 49.7 per cent. to country churches. The town and village churches, of course, include many members drawn from the country areas. The church members actually residing in towns represent 24.3 per cent. of the total town population; those residing in villages represent 22.8 per cent. of the total village population; those residing in the hamlets and the open country represent 13.1 per cent. of the total hamlet and open country population. This latter percentage

is low primarily because most of the communities without churches are country communities. . . .

One cannot help but be impressed by the sensitiveness of the Church as an institution to all changes which vitally affect the society supporting it. Various tendencies affecting the conditions of country life during the past decade have seriously conditioned the problem of the Church. The most obvious of these changes has been the shift in population. The towns and the larger villages are generally growing in population. In the newer sections the open-country population has been likewise growing, though not so rapidly, but in the older settled sections the population of hamlets and of the open country, even in areas whose general population has increased, has usually suffered loss during the last decade. The tendency is for church membership to follow population with remarkable similarity. In these twenty-five counties two-thirds of the churches which are gaining are in communities in which the population is increasing, and at least one-quarter more of the churches are registering gain in the face of a stationary rather than a decreasing constituency. Very few churches are found which were able to gain consistently while the population which they served was decreasing.

It is hard to maintain a church in a decreasing population or where the interest of the population is being diverted from its local institutions toward some neighboring larger center; and this is true even though the areas of a declining population are, generally speaking, those in which the country church is most firmly rooted, while the growing communities, so far as the open country is concerned, are generally in areas in which the establishment of the church is least secure. But decline in population engenders a psychology of defeat; and, in fact, this explains also the difficulty of the church which must compete with the increasing influence of a near-by institution

more strategically located. The consequence is, as has been intimated in other connections, that the farm is becoming our most difficult church problem in the town and country area.

This discouraging showing might well undermine everything except our faith in the American nation and in the Christian Church. There is encouragement to be found in certain large movements in American life in recent years, some of which have been referred to already. Two striking facts are to be added:

(1) There is a new interpretation of the country which has awakened in many men and women an interest in country people and a desire to serve them. There are increasing numbers every year going into rural religious service. The numbers are not so great as to satisfy the need, but the important thing is that the volunteers understand the country and go with a clear-eyed recognition of what they are to find. In Illinois I have met in the past two years young men who are taking up country work in that increasingly prosperous section and are valuing highly the response of farmers and the residents of little towns. They are finding their happiness in the reward of living among country people. Two years ago a young man took me ten miles south of Decatur, to his manse, and then ten miles farther, to the field in which he desired to live, because, he said, it was filled with children. And indeed I found it so: an open-country place thronged with beautiful, attractive, intelligent children, simply clad, many of them barefoot, but with the good manners and the high breeding of a superior stock. It

was his plan to make his home among them, out of reach of the city of Decatur, and give his life to them.

(2) The development of the community church is another hopeful factor. Churches which express the revolt of their communities against denominational differences, which give voice to the determination to be one, are developing in great numbers throughout the country. Mr. Piper, their historian, says:

> The development of the Community Church as a self-conscious movement in American religious life, is a new phenomenon. . . .
>
> Since 1915 strong trends towards the community organization of religion have been developing in the Central and Western States. These trends have been felt also in the East. And in the past two years it is said that the interest in the Community Church has been greater in the South in proportion to population, than in any other section of the country. The movement is therefore unrestricted as to geographical area.
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> The actual number of Community Churches now operating is not known, but exceeds 800. . . . New churches are at present being organized at the rate of six per month. . . . The denominational type is, judged by statistics, the least popular form of Community Church in every section of the country. The growth of the Community Church movement will continue. The only question is as to its rapidity. The chief needs are publicity and leadership.

A third reason for hope of improvement can be added. There are signs that the country-church problem awaits a national solution. The great number of open-country

churches that are dependent upon national boards of missions for their support indicates that their dependence has a cause with which we must deal. "About one in five," say Morse and Brunner, "receive home mission aid."[2] This cause, probably, is in the need the farmer has for a national stimulus. What it means we do not know, but the nation needs the farmer and the farmer needs the church. The logic of this situation may in the future bring many persons to recognize that the country as a whole through the denominations or through federations of churches should support the local congregation. In Scotland every parson of the United Free Church receives about two hundred pounds as a sustentation grant.[3] This, if he is in a city church, provides a comfortable item along with what the church can give: if he is in a country church ever so poor, it provides him with a meager living. But every man has a living. To this sustentation fund the church gives as it can, every congregation according to its means. We in the United States may come to the same method.

[2] "The Town and Country Church in the United States," p. 107.

[3] See Report of the Central Committee, United Free Church. Edinburgh, 1924.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT IS RELIGION?

THERE is need, in American thinking, of a definition of the church. We have none in which we can all agree. The European definitions that have come through the denominations nearest in their origins to the Catholic, as the Lutheran and Protestant Episcopal, have not received general attention. American religious history has necessitated no definition, and is just beginning to provide itself with an ideal of the church. An individualistic conception has hitherto prevailed. A drastic evangelism has supplied universal language of popular religion, to the exclusion of ideas of the church. To the evangelist the soul is all. The authority of the congregation over personal character has passed. The whole machinery of discipline has become rusty. The appeal to the individual, in a population which for a century and a quarter has been increasing, and for a century has been recruited from alien elements, has been thrust to the first place. And for the sake of strengthening that evangelism we have deliberately put out of our mind all ideas of church or community. Yet they have crept in.

We have not been content with our masses of church members. Doubts of the thoroughness of our

methods have obsessed us for a quarter-century. In spite of the vociferations of the soul-winners it is plain that, granting them all they contend for, the converts they win must be schooled in Christian living. A great humanitarian passion impels the older members born in the churches to pity the poor, to remedy the evils of the social system, and to voice the mind of Christ for this generation. So there has come into existence a sense of the church. But what is a church?

In societies of increasing complexity the religious body has a function to perform. Its duties are not manifold, they are simple. Other agencies have functions which do not belong to the church. The minister is nowadays exhorted to stick to his religious duties. But what are his duties? Education belongs to the schools, charity to the agencies of poor relief; business has its manifold corporations, which devise ethical standards by themselves, better helped by the church indirectly than they would be if the church were in business; science demands the right to discover and proclaim truths as to phenomena, uncontrolled by the church, and even unadvised. A complex social life honors the church for its evident value, but demands that it perform its inescapable task and leave others to their special work.

There must be some reason for the universal construction of churches by societies. For societies are universally and uniformly religious. Individuals differ as to their religious profession, but societies all express the social value of religion by erecting tem-

ples, tabernacles, synagogues, meeting-houses, churches. What, then, is a church?

In the way of answer to this question we turn to those who find the occasion of religion in mystery. Amiel says:

Society lives by faith, develops by science. Its basis, then, is the mysterious, the unknown, the intangible,—religion,—while the fermenting principle in it is the desire of knowledge. Its permanent substance is the uncomprehended or the divine; its changing form is the result of its intellectual labor. . . . The efficiency of religion lies precisely in that which is not rational, philosophic, nor eternal; its efficacy lies in the unforeseen, the miraculous, the extraordinary. Thus religion attracts more devotion in proportion as it demands more faith—that is to say, as it becomes more incredible to the profane mind. The philosopher aspires to explain away all mysteries, to dissolve them into light. It is mystery, on the other hand, which the religious instinct demands and pursues; it is mystery which constitutes the essence of worship, the power of proselytism. When the cross became the "foolishness" of the cross, it took possession of the masses. And in our own day, those who wish to get rid of the supernatural, to enlighten religion, to economize faith, find themselves deserted, like poets who should declaim against poetry, or women who should decry love. Faith consists in the acceptance of the incomprehensible, and even in the pursuit of the impossible, and is self-intoxicated with its own sacrifices, its own repeated extravagances.

Religion, then, is a form of behavior in the presence of the unknown. The greatness of religion in

human life is measurable by the predominance of mystery over knowledge. The greater part of the universe is unmapped, uncharted, unexplained. Toward this greater reality our attitude must be religious. Awe and fear, humility and forgiveness, are the expressions of man in the Jewish-Christian religions covering reality. Other religions have sacrifices, ceremonies, taboos: and we inherit from them some of their forms because we have not fully emerged from paganism. But the followers of the Hebrew prophets and of the apostles of Jesus have for more than two thousand years translated religion into moral conduct appropriate to the fear of one God who does righteously.

The issue is confused somewhat nowadays, not only by the survival of paganism,—since all societies are retentive of their past,—but even more by the habit of the scientific student to form hypotheses upon every conceivable subject. What they do not fully know they cover by a working hypothesis. So that there is not left any large area upon which awe may express its humility and reserve. Even the mysterious heavens above are explained by logical guesses of the astronomers. Thus the countryman who reads may not look up at the starry sky and think God dwells there. He is reminded to single out a planet and to note the location of the nebulæ. His universe, which is as great and awful as ever, has become to him something easy to classify. The astronomer is more likely to fear God when he looks up than the intelligent farmer is, for the student of the skies knows how little they are explainable and

how evanescent are the guesses of scholars. Thus popular science darkens religious faith.

Another force that confuses our interpretation of religion is the presence in every population of mystics. These have an inborn habit of feeling themselves aware of the Divine. They have a sense for God. He is "nearer to them than hands or feet." To them religious verities are phenomena. They "know God"; though they would perhaps admit that it is by another sense than the five we have in common with all men. Yet they testify to experiences of the Divine such as other men do not have, that are as real in time and place as other experiences are. These men and women are not a majority of any society, but they are much in evidence. They often predominate in any religious assembly. They have had great influence in setting the standards of feeling, of expression, and of interpretation. Others who have not their "experiences" are silent or assenting, even though some of the greatest religious leaders and writers give no testimony concerning mystic experiences. So that it is common for men to speak about knowing God, when they mean believing in God. The sense-experience of the mystic, whatever it is, has set the standard of expression. The fact that God is unseen and unrevealed in phenomena, that "no man can see God and live," is forgotten and religious experiences of which only a few are capable are presented to the many as the standard experiences.

I am not interested in the truth of the mystic's experimental evidence. To him it is authoritative. I will go so far as to say that it should for him have authority.

My only contention is that it is not an experience required of every Christian by the standards of his faith or the example of his greatest prophets. It is open to very few. Yet the vividness of it and its desirability, its fruitfulness in joy and emotion, have caused it to be taken for the universal religious experience. It has made religion a phenomenal thing. Whereas the greatness of religion is in its relation to the unknown. The act of the religious man is faith, not knowledge.

In Bernard Shaw's play "Saint Joan" the Maid comes before her first opposer, who demands to know the means by which she apprehends her visions. She replies that it is by means of her imagination. Shaw, that interpreter of human experience, in his idealization of the heroic Joan elevates her above common understanding of her, by placing her inspiration in the moral realm rather than the emotional. He makes her a heroine instead of an ecstatic.

Country people, who generally have no church theory, but only a doctrine of the individual, are prolific in their religious experiences of a mystic sort. American religious history, especially rural history, unchastened by the ethical restraints that would inhere in a social doctrine of the church, is filled with ecstatic annals. Revivals run wild. Soil-born sects flourish. Lonely living vegetates in individual passion for God and in cravings to save souls by "praying them through" a like passion, or the imitation of it, into peace. Every country community has its quota of fanatics who know God and so can rebuke their moral betters—regardless of blameless

lives and fruits meet for repentance—because they are themselves "perfect."

One does not need to regret this, or to find a flaw in the character of the mystic—who has his peculiar virtues—if he desires, as the writer does, to build his understanding of the country church upon its true basis of faith in unseen realities. The mystic has rendered great services to the cause of religion; probably he has a peculiar use that no other can render. But there must also be a place in religious life for the man who has no phenomenal evidence of Divine things. There must be, therefore, a common basis for him and the mystic as well. It is found in the recognition that God and the greater realities are unknown; that we are saved by faith.

Likewise, the scientific worker is not depreciated when one states that the verities of religion are beyond both his searching or his reasoning. I am not arguing against the use of hypothesis when I assert that to cover heaven and earth with ordered speculations has taken awe and humility out of life for the common literate man. The scientist may say that his studies have brought him, by reasoning, nearer to God. They do not bring the man nearer who reads the popular science of the daily paper and the weekly magazine. They rob him of his vision and veil the heavens in verifications, cloud the skies of wonder with measurements which weak intelligences cannot comprehend. Popularized sciences, disseminated through a myriad newspapers and magazines written by men skilled in neither research nor the interpretation of the cautious

generalizations of the scientific societies, are read by the many. They substitute for the wonder proper to the unthinking a cock-sure information. So that we have a smart people, working daily with machinery, knowing a little themselves, talking glibly about science, with which they associate their daily contacts but of which they have no share, and waiting for a similar phenomenal knowledge of God.

Knowledge, however, has had nothing to do with the great and extensive religious experience of our people. The learned, trained to verify, have not been our prophets, but men of imagination who have spoken to lonely souls tried with the awfulness of life, and have called them to faith in the unseen God. Our religious leaders have been like Paul calling upon the people in Athens[1] to worship the Unknown God. The churches they have founded have the character of organizations which stand in awe and fear before the unseen. Their resulting moral character is determined by the fact that the faith which has provided the United States with churches is Christian faith, whose God is a righteous God, austere and full of pity.

The life of Americans on the land has been fruitful of religion because our peopling of this continent has been an awful experience. The early annalists of the westward march of the pioneers all dwell upon the fearsomeness of the wilderness: the forests dark and overwhelming; the vast plains where no law reigned but that of tooth and horn; the pitiless storms; the long, cruel winter. Wild beasts and savage men confronted

[1] Acts, XVII, 23.

them on all sides. Is it any wonder that they welcomed the preachers and at their word fell down sobbing and repentant?

And the life of country men of the present has always before it the wonder of growing plants, the mystery of animal life, and the inscrutable decree of nature, the seasons and the storms. The farmer lives among uncertainties about which he cannot be deceived; he knows he has to proceed by faith. He plants in the spring and waits for the wonder of germination and the miracle of growth. The Providence he deals with is unseen but stimulative to the imagination. The wonders about him engage his acts of duty. His industry is a struggle with mysterious powers. Like Saint Joan, he hears voices, but they speak in his moral nature. The Christian tradition falling in such prepared soil, fertilized with poverty and labor and watered with ever so little preaching, has produced nearly all the religious vegetation we have in the United States and Canada. The cities admit that their churches could not live if it were not for the country. Pastors of city churches declare eloquently that their membership is recruited from among those who live not among the mechanical processes of mills and factories but among the mysteries of the uncertain tillage of the soil. Religion is native not to the world of measurement but to that experience of mankind in which he walks all his days on the edge of the abyss of mystery. Its roots are in awe; its fruits are the moral ventures of faith.

The American churches have had a national origin.

That is, the greater number of them have been planted by missionaries who were sent from older churches on the Eastern seaboard. Of one denomination, not the most zealous, in which there are enumerated ten thousand congregations, it is said that nine thousand were nourished in their beginnings by home-missions aid. The Western community had not long to wait for a preacher. On the heels of the trader and the railway agent came the missionary, supported by a "grant in aid" from some denominational board of one of the older sects. His call first assembled the people for worship. They had to be exhorted at the start: but soon there was a Sunday-school, soon a congregation to which with other "appointments" he ministered; until, if the settlement grew, it could support its own pastor and carry on alone.

The churches which cover the land are, moreover, predominantly of European types. Most of the names of the congregations that dot the plains and face one another on village streets are European. The very sectarian divisions they perpetuate in America were first split asunder in western European states. What do Lutherans and Presbyterians and Methodists and Baptists and Catholics signify but that the American religion, even the most rural religion, is European? The original impulses which sent out these streams of influence to illumine the mystery of the American struggle on the land were European imitations.

And the American rural churches are moral centers. The sanctions for conduct have been, for a hundred years of pioneering, in the churches. The bitter

struggle to purify family life which wrote the pages of church discipline in red, testifies to the fact that it was the church which decreed that marriage should be "pure." It was the New England meeting-house that made the American monogamous. And when Mormonism in revolt decreed that its followers might practise polygamy, the permission came in the form of a religious decree, sanctioned by a bible, supported by a revelation. It was the churches of the United States that fought this feature of the Mormon creed and forced the Government to outlaw plural marriage. I am not here discussing the merits of the issue, but observing the ethical mind of the American church.

Prohibition was organized by churchmen, propagandized throughout the churches, and carried to its national victory under the leadership of men who claimed the sanction of the Protestant churches. Indeed, in Ohio, the American method of temperance reform was conceived as a praying campaign: women met in the churches to fortify themselves for visits to the saloon, on whose floors they knelt in prayer to testify to their reasons for interfering with an established business.

Probably the average man thinks of the church as a place where conduct is discussed, and of the religion of the churches as a matter of conduct. We do not oppose his view in saying that religion is behavior in the face of mystery. The spiritual nature of American religion, its very lack of order and dignity, its reliance upon the spoken word, are all evidences that in this land men rely upon religious sanctions of conduct,

that are not in material things or economic advantage but in the unseen world to which the preacher summons the attention.

Among the many definitions of religion is that which describes it as a valuation of life. Religion in the mind of some teachers is the highest expression of worth. It is a value-judgment upon life itself. The experience of religion is a conviction of the worth, the reward, the comfort, and the satisfaction of living. It is an affirmative answer to the question: Is life worth living? The Christian religion in particular is, by these prophets, declared to be the survivor in an age of the world for which other religions have proved inadequate, wherein suicide and despair would otherwise rule.

In baser minds this sense of worth takes the form of comfort. Fears and unrest, discontent and violence would be the law of many persons incapable of analysis and of consecutive thought. To them Christianity brings, after prayer and profound contrition, a sense of reconcilement and of personal comfort. These are the souls to each of whom the evangelist must say, "Christ died for you."

The worth of life is given by Christianity to disordered minds.[1] Undoubtedly the revival meeting has the effect of curing many insanities of the minor sort.

[1] See "The Church and the Sick Soul," by Anton T. Boisen in "The Adult Bible Class Magazine," May, 1924. Also, by the same author, "Concerning the Relationship Between Religious Experience and Mental Disorders," National Committee for Mental Hygiene. 1923.

Obedience to Christ is the cure of minds diseased. Christ is the way for the feet of many who would wander in forbidden paths of thought, in delusions and loneliness. If it were not for the emotional functions and the control of will which Christianity provides as a suggestion, where would the hypnotists themselves draw their power? Too little attention has been paid and too little credit has been given to the evangelist as a practical alienist. The Roman Catholic priest in the confessional is the oldest psychiatrist now in service. Untaught in science, the parish priest inherits traditions of dealing with the mind diseased; and the evangelist in the inquiry room or whispering urgently into the ear of a shrinking sinner on the back seat of a country church, is an effective healer of the hurts of the mind. These ministers of Christ have done more, I venture to believe, than the keepers in the asylums, or the few trained physicians who guide men back to sanity from the border of madness. They find in our religion a conviction of the worth of life which saves the unsteady soul.

Among country people there are many inferior minds, more in proportion than are able to remain at large in the cities. The strain of life is less intense, the accidents and alarms are less acute in the country, and the exactions of farm labor are less than those of the city business. So that many inferior minds are recognizable in the country population, even to the unskilled observer. Social students[2] have attempted to measure the pro-

2 "Rural Sociology," John M. Gillette; Macmillan. 1922. Pp. 115–119. "The Rural Community," Newell LeRoy Sims. Scribner's. 1920. Part III, Division 3.

portion of mental defectives in the composition of various rural populations. Their returns are too scanty to be quoted with authority. But in some sections of the country, from which the bright and aspiring persons have been drawn away by the attractions of city employment, the number of morons and inferior humans is noticeably large. Very often the school-teacher or the minister becomes aware of the control of school or church by a man or woman whose conduct can be explained only in this manner.

In view of this situation, which every social worker in the country will understand, the prevalence of revivalism among country people has a justification. Until a better administration of life is possible and the weak can be sifted from the strong, until we can lift the administration of popular institutions that are governed by public opinion out of the hand of the weak brother and the silly sister, we shall do well to use a method that steadies and arouses them and forbids them to express the impulses of the imbecile and moron. We must be content with the negative result which the old methods have given.

It is constantly asserted that Christianity is a religion of individualism, that personality is its flower and individual character its foliage. This is true in a limited degree among American farmers. Probably the highest expression of individual independence we have is the maintenance of the family farm. The weakening of the incentive to be independent is observed, however, in the exodus from the farm, the indifference to

those conditions of life which would maintain the farm as a way of life when profit tempted to the town. Is it too much to say that the departure of many families from the farm to the town or city expresses a dissent from the teachings of Christianity; which have called upon the soul to be strong and have summoned the personality to seek after God? The excessive interest in city life has many sources, but among them is some solvent of the austerity and the proud independence that has maintained the farm household hitherto, in places where only Christian teaching can explain the self-sacrifice it requires.

But a more startling evidence of the decay of Christian influence is seen in the prevalence of dominating opinions and in the suppression of individual variation. The decay of the Christian religion is evidenced in the village and open country in the rule of the town over the person, in the power of gossip and scandal, in the fear inspired by mass imitations, in the decay of habits of discussion, in the disuse by country people of intellectual analysis as a basis of any action. We used to have in the country superior persons. We now have discouraged all these as far as we may and driven them to live in cities where they have opportunity to be peculiar. It is dangerous for any one in a village to vary or dissent. But the very essence of Christianity is the prophetic spirit, which makes men peculiar. When the Christian religion is at its highest, it finds a place for men who differ with their fellows and who express a critical mind. The low state of

spirituality among country people is seen in the dead levels of opinion, the imitation of dogmatical statement, and the authority possessed by conventional habits. To conform is required of every one, to testify and to prophesy is not the custom among farmers, even in the pulpit.

CHAPTER V

HOSPITALITY

THE beginnings of the churches in the United States were laid in the entertaining of strangers. Most of the country churches were established at the time of the first settlement of the land. The houses were opened to the visiting ministers before churches were organized, and hospitality was one of the earliest functions of the church. In the country, people still entertain in their homes. The great majority of the churches are small and poor. There are no hotels in their vicinity and many of the visitors could not afford hotels if they were available. The custom of entertaining ministers, which is a usage as old as the Old Testament, is dearly prized by churches in the country. Sometimes the official visitor from denominational headquarters is quietly advised that he will give offense if he does not accept the hospitality of the people in the churches. Often in the wealthiest congregations of the towns the visitor is entertained with the same zest as the country people show. We must not forget this atmosphere of hospitality if we are to understand the country church.

Not the sermon nor the service of worship is more prominent in the Sabbath spent in the country by the

preacher than the dinner to which he is invited. Remembering that most rural congregations have no settled pastor,—not one in eight in Ohio is provided with a resident minister who is responsible for his own entertainment,—one has a measure of the boundless and incessant hospitality which keeps pace in the country with the preaching and the worship of the farmer's church. Since the minister or visitor is taken to a near-by and substantial home on the farm or the village street, he often, though not always, meets thus the most substantial citizens. Whoever has gone much among country churches has his memory stored with vivid pictures of entering farm-yards, sitting in the farmer's parlor, eating at the farmer's table.

When religion has outgrown churches, I suppose it will still express itself in dinners, for a meal is older than a temple. We are assured that the Lord instituted a sacramental meal, whether He established a church or not. Surely a dinner is nearer to the mind of God, especially a country dinner. And when art ceases to be academic, or childish, it will still set a table; for a common meal is a work of art. It represents life in as full measure as canvas or marble can. A country dinner in a remote farm-house, with twenty-five at the table in the great kitchen, is one of the most representative experiences. Scientists should study the lesson of life at the dinner-party. For a country dinner-party is a social gathering.

Nowadays they come to a country dinner in automobiles. What greetings at the driveway! What

explanations of the farmer's intentions to widen the approach, that used to serve for carriages! What merry, expectant faces of children!—and kisses exchanged by cousins who never dare on ordinary occasions! Then there is a long wait in the "sitting-room," where the man of the house is not loth to explain about his pipeless furnace, or his new electric-light system. And all the time from the big kitchen issue sounds of bustle and odors of purest satisfaction, the smell of meat cooking, whiffs of spices in pies. And nobody looks that way; it would be unmannerly. The expectant group is enlarged from time to time by arrivals from the barn or the yard, or by whole family groups bundled in wraps. Finally the farm hands enter in their best clothes, which they have had on since breakfast. This is the sign that dinner is about ready.

Nowadays we have place cards. It used to be easy to seat the family upon the genial call from the host to "sit down anywhere," for once custom and privilege were clear and no one blundered. But now at each place is a pretty card with a verse, and beside it a toy from Woolworth's store of trifles—each one unlike the other: a miniature elephant lifting tiny logs, a coach and four the size of a walnut. The children are no more pleased at these than are their elders. While the first turkey is carved and served by the patriarch, the verses are read and compared. There is more than one neat quip and some fine sentiment. But it is not till hunger is sated, an hour later, that the smaller children climb

down from their chairs and encircle the table to inspect the tiny toys; and not every one of their elders is willing to part with the mementos of the occasion.

The carving by the head of the house is a religious rite, which not even an eldest son may perform, and an artistic performance capping the good wife's achievement. We remember an old farmer who so completely analyzed two turkeys into portions for each plate, that the platter was carried off empty: every bone was served, with its due portions of dark or light; and on every plate a heap of potato, of turnip, and of dressing, so much that the plate could hold no more. On any but a holiday there would be expostulation. But to-day even the delicate maiden aunt who has never confessed a gusto for things, accepts her helping calmly and empties her plate in some manner.

Now, the art of the country dinner is known to the women alone. To the men it is victuals. The women inspect every dish and taste every flavor, sense every shading of spice in pickle or jam, with delicate analysis of inherited recipes and nicety of comparison with other occasions and other family customs. That this dinner is a work of art is shown by the regulated comment upon recipes. At the time of eating there is only silent appreciation, but the lady of the house trembles for the brown on her turkey or the "jell" of her cranberries. Some other day, but not on the day of the dinner, these women will exchange the tricks of their art. To-day the talk is of all else than the masterpiece in which the day centers.

The profound friendship in which the foundations

of the church are laid develops in the house even more than in the public meeting. It is in the entertaining of the guest, a voluntary act, which cements the movements of feeling as the passive states of religion do not. Hospitality gives the learner in religion something to do. I remember the devoted attentions bestowed upon me as a guest and speaker in many a country place. They were ready to sacrifice themselves for my comfort and convenience. Once in Wisconsin a farmer eighty years of age who all that morning had plowed a field, rode with me in his automobile forty miles to a train, that I might make a convenient connection. I shall never forget the old man, his white hair like a poetic phrase, sitting with me in the rear seat while his son raced us across the prairie. There was finer eloquence in his attentions than in anything I said that day.

It is evident to the student of the small church, especially in one of the minor denominations, that the lesser communions live in an intimate personal acquaintance. Every minister knows or has met each prominent member of nearly every church. The meetings of the whole body have brought them together from the ends of the country. One cannot understand the many denominations we have in the United States until he realizes that religion dwells in hospitality. Against this cordial sense theories of church union beat in vain. If our religion were a matter of philosophy, we might have church union and we certainly would have creeds "made in America." If it is to be efficient in a practical sense, it must be catholic. Instead of being any

of these it is hospitable. It exercises itself as much at a dinner table as at the sacramental board. Therefore we have in this country a multitude of small denominations, each of them just big enough for every prominent family to entertain each of their distinguished ministers, bishops, or secretaries.

The church is the most distinguished experience of most of its members. The officer of a small church belongs to something more notable and famous than any other connection to which he adheres. To see the officers of a little congregation serve in their places in the aisle or at public meetings by the minister's side is to realize that these men have in their church a dignity which for them is unique.

The house of the minister, when he resides in the country, becomes a center of hospitality. It is necessary for him to entertain a great variety of guests. His is the official home of the congregation. Every one comes to him first. He must have a readiness to receive the stranger—not the tramp or the beggar, who are quite as welcome or unwelcome in the homes about, but the official visitor, the district superintendent, the archdeacon, or the evangelist. In the old times, resident ministers could have many servants. They possessed, moreover, a small farm for the raising of produce and the supplying of house and barn with an abundance of food. Labor was cheap, money was scarce. The minister with little was abundantly supplied; he occupied a superior position.

The tradition of the hospitality of that day persists. It is often a burden upon the minister's wife at the pres-

ent time. She should be spared; for, with all forbearance on the part of the thoughtful, her burdens will still be great as the official hostess of the little society. There are great advantages to match this evident cost. Upon the minister's children the effect of entertaining is valuable. They will never forget the experience of the dinner table where strangers are so often present. Unconsciously they acquire the manners of the larger world. They enjoy an extraordinary advantage who grow up in a minister's house in a small community, for the guests are their teachers and the class is one of free discussion, natural expression, and critical discrimination. The children see behind the scenes. They learn words of sincerity as well as hear the expressions of eloquence.

The exchanges in the house are more vital than the messages of the church. The children of the family, who say little but look on and listen, absorb more of the religion of the official visitor than they would get from his public utterances. In New York State a farmer's son said to his father: "That preacher of ours has never asked to see the dairy. All he cares for is to eat and sit in the parlor."

Just so the hospitality of the little church is an occasion for the intimate meeting of the humble church member with the most noted orator. A young official of the Methodist church related his experience in a village home. As he was summoned to the table, his hostess paused and impressively said to him: "That chair you are sitting in—the bishop sat in that chair five years ago."

Conversely, the little church in the open country or

small town has been from the first a school of good manners. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that American etiquette has been strained through the mesh of the country church. The earliest, simplest, and most numerous schools of conduct as to both ethics and etiquette are the churches in the small communities.

The hospitality of the small church is for many people a discipline in good manners and in fine restraint. Men are converted to active Christian faith in connection with their aspirations to do well in the world. They join the church in adolescence or early married life when ambitions to get on are strongest, so that the experiences of the meeting-house go deep into their memory and shape their conduct. The men see how other men behave, the women note what other women wear. Imitations pass without friction or reluctance in the atmosphere of religion. Saint Paul spoke wisely when he bade his converts imitate himself. Jesus appealed to religious feeling in commanding His disciples to imitate Him. In lesser ways every religious meeting is an experience of leadership and following. Conduct, therefore, is made in churches, and behavior is modified there.

Thus, religious custom is at its highest in the United States because in a new country the churches have had to extend themselves by visiting and entertaining and by hospitable acts one to another. The American churches have a lively sense of fellowship, because we are a new country. In this hospitable atmosphere the impartation of manners and impulses in conduct has had greater force, so that the American church is the national school of manners. Since most of the old American stock come

from small communities, from farms and villages, it follows that the church in the town and country has been the drill-master of Americans in the way they should behave. It teaches ethics and it is arbiter of etiquette.

Very naturally the American churches came in due time, by the way of culture in manners, to the reform movement which resulted in the prohibition laws. Here is a habit of eating and drinking controlled by law, largely because Protestant churches, which in the United States are products of the soil, have declared the use of alcohol as a beverage to be a sin. Their influence initiated the movement to outlaw the drinking of wine. At the present time the Protestant churches in this country would overwhelmingly oppose the slightest modification of the national prohibition law. Strange situation in which a habit of hospitality is determined by an act of the legislature! But stranger still is the social experience which required it.

But if one understands the states of mind of small communities, he will be amazed to see how they dictate behavior and impose their control upon the young, upon those who teach the children in the schools, upon ministers, and upon some public officials. By this democratic control of conduct the mind of the church is molded in the homes. This dominance of the home in religion may explain to the foreigner the origin of the prohibition laws, which have roots in the hospitality of the farm and the village home.

In the organization of these churches themselves, hospitality is exalted to a place equal to that of doctrine.

Church dinners are quite as necessary to the small congregation as sermons are; and, except during one hour of the week, a sermon would suffer if it attempted to compete with a dinner. No custom of the small-town church is more essential than the breaking of bread together. As the church develops and expands, equipment for cooking and eating is added to that for speaking and hearing. Before a country church builds class rooms, it builds a kitchen; and when one faces the facts of life, a place to cook and to eat is more essential to the processes of religion than a place in which to teach the words of a book. The Sacrament is earlier than the New Testament, and the Passover is older than the Old.

CHAPTER VI

WOMEN

THE prosperity of the church depends upon the stability of the population. The stability of the population in the country has its measure in the contentment of the farmers' wives. The country woman of the generation just past has been discontented. A change toward greater contentment—or perhaps toward greater courage—is recorded in the past five years. The investigations of Miss Florence Ward of the Department of Agriculture at Washington have registered this change. The reasons for the discontent of farmers' wives and daughters are profound and far-reaching. The feminist agitation of the past generation has not overlooked them. There was in the atmosphere a seed of discontent borne along on the winds of public opinion. It could not be shut out of any house. But beyond this the farmer's wife has in her occupation many sources of unrest. All she needs, to cause her to leave the old home, is an open way of release. The result has been that women are the leaders of the movement to town and city. And young women are found on the farms in lesser numbers than young men.

The toil of the self-subsisting household of 1840 is gone; but in its place is the grinding routine of feeding "hands" at harvest-time, and on milk farms at all

seasons. The writings of Hamlin Garland were a bitter attack upon the toilsome and dreary life of the middle-West farm home. His descriptions of the threshing scene were arid and strained, his pictures of the filthy farm-yard and the repulsive drudgery of the barn were depressing, but his testimony to the joyless life of the farmer's wife was the most damning of all. In his later writings Garland has found poetry to describe and beauty to record in the Western farm. But his earlier writing, in which he expressed his own revolt and rebellion against farm drudgery, showed why the farm woman in the West has fled to the town.

The life of the American farm enticed women and rewarded them so long as it was adventurous. While the pioneers were going westward their women wished to go with them, because they shared the desire for a new country. Women are never afraid of hardship when their men are engaged in it. But as the illusion of the "home in the West" passed, the women, true realists always, saw the fruitlessness of the life struggle first. Hamlin Garland's mother wearied before Richard Garland, her husband, did of their many moves from farm to farm upon the prairies.[1] The "Star in the West" dimmed for her before her husband had lost his illusion. So the women in the great farming sections began before their men did to long for the town and to complain of the drudgery of the farm, its hopeless, unrewarded fight with dirt and poverty. The men could

[1] "The Son of the Middle Border," Hamlin Garland. Macmillan.

see a generation ahead and the men were right. The present generation possesses what that of 1890 desired. But the women of that decade desired for their own particular children an education fit for Americans. They wanted for their families a taste of the new culture crudely voiced in the village Chautauqua. They craved, with the hunger of all the women before them for the three generations since their ancestors had departed from Europe, better clothes and the opportunity to wear them, books to read and music to hear.

A windy November evening in the little old farmhouse.

"Ethan Ripley, you'll haff to do your own cooking from now on to New Year's. I'm goin' back to Yaark State." [Quizzical surprise on the part of old Ethan!]

"Howgy 'xpect to get the money, mother? Anybody died an' left yeh a pile?"

"Never you mind where I get the money, so's't you don't haff to bear it. . . ."

"You need n't twit me of bein' poor, old woman," said Ripley, flaming up. "I've done my part t' get along. . . ."

"Oh! I ain't done no work, have I?" snapped she. . . .

"I don't know what y' call doin' my part, Ethan Ripley; but if cookin' for a drove of harvest hands and thrashin' hands, takin' care o' the eggs and butter, 'n' diggin' taters an' milkin' ain't my part, I don't never expect to do my part, 'n' you might as well know it furst's last.

"I'm sixty years old, an' I've never had a day to myself, not even Fourth o' July. If I've went a visitin' 'r to a picnic, I've had to come home an' milk 'n' get supper for you menfolks. I ain't been away t' stay over night for thirteen years in this house, 'n' it was just so in Davis County for ten

more. For twenty-three years, Ethan Ripley, I 've stuck right to the stove an' churn without a day or a night off." Her voice choked. . . . "And now I 'm a-goin' back to Yaark State."

Ethan was vanquished.[2]

It is surprising to learn that the country girl is more discontented than the boy with the life of the farm and the village. In a recent study of a score of farm homes on a highway in New Jersey we found not one girl over sixteen remaining at home. Some of the young men had remained on the farms. The study of a beautiful farming village in the center of New York's most fertile farming region brought from the girls the declaration that they would like to go away from that place to live. One girl wrote, in answer to the inquiry as to her reasons, "I want to leave the farm because I live on one!" In this place a goodly proportion of the boys elected to stay; some gave reasons for their preference such as the nation's need of food and the farmer's duty to provide it. There is no measurement known to me of the relative proportions of boys and girls who stay, but there are many evidences that the exodus from the country is led by the young women.

This may be part of the restlessness which possesses so many women at present, a symptom of change in the very form of society itself. The girl may want to leave the farm because her mother prompts her to do so. The desire for something different, especially a sort of life in which the status given to the man may be given

[2] "Main Travelled Roads," Hamlin Garland.

to her,—as is not the case on the farm,—may have something to do with it. If so, then the rural exodus is partly explained by social restlessness, particularly the discontent of women.

It is evident in all the cases that have come to my attention that the girl fails to see reasons for staying on the farm such as the boys see. The motive "to feed the world" does not appeal to her. And because it does not, there is not the place on the farm for her that her brother finds there. The farm may feed the world, but she sees other women feeding only tired men and the task does not attract her. Something within her, strong, demanding, a sense of worth and joy, calls her elsewhere; while the like sense of worth and dignity appeals to her brother when he looks upon the fields and feeds the stock. He wants to produce. She wants —something. She knows it is somewhere else. So the girl has come to be the wanderer who starts out from the village. In olden times it was only the boy who wandered.

Of course some girls and women fear the country and cannot abide its loneliness. This is a physical fear and sometimes cannot be overcome. It is like the general aversion to snakes. It is more like the less general but very real aversion to water which some have—a feeling hard, sometimes impossible, to overcome. Some women are afraid of the passer-by; they suspect every pedestrian of being a tramp and a miscreant. They dread the dark. The call of the whippoorwill makes them "feel creepy." They never learn to drive a horse or an automobile. Such women used to stay in the house,

and their lot was often dull enough; for some of them life was a crucifixion. They belong in towns and cities. It is well for them to leave the country.

Girls and women without imagination, too, find it hard to live in a quiet place. They find "no life here" in the country. "This place is too dull" for them. It may have the beauty of the Alps or the charm of New England, but they cannot see it. They lack the eye to see, and no poet or painter has shown to them what the mind alone can see. They need to travel; then maybe they will come back satisfied. They need to read. Some day the moving picture may interpret to the dullest of them the home beauties. Alas! most of the interpreters of life's beauty are milling around in tawdry cities and towns, where they are reduced to seeing beauty in their own conceit! Egotism possesses the artists and the poets, not interpretation.

And the country girl's teachers—yes, her teachers—present an interpretation of the farm and village which leaves her cold. They have just one idea; the schools, the farm journals, the county agents, even the ministers, have no other. Country life is interpreted in America universally as mere production, which is a man's job. It is not all of the farmer's job, as a matter of fact; but it is such an interest as to engage him and not his sister or his daughter. Instinctively the young woman wants something beyond production. She wants to have her own money, and there is no such thing for the woman, at least the unmarried woman, on the farm. Why does she want her own money? Because she wants to be a consumer rather than a producer. That is what God

made her to be, the creator not of goods or values but of joys and satisfactions, of comforts and interests. It is her place to give worth to life, not goods. It is the boy's instinct to provide goods and to possess property, tools, materials.

Only one side of country life is presented nowadays by its advocates. The Government has for two generations now had an agrarian policy, but it is not a woman's policy. It has to do with land and what land will produce. Cities have been growing, which want of the farm what they need for food and clothing. Their demands are ruthless. They publish the papers, send forth the teachers, motivate the legislators, put their illusion upon the orators and preachers. No voice is heard but theirs. The city cares not for the farm home, nor for the beauty of the village street—has not done so heretofore, at any rate. It cares for nothing but goods for its own wants and needs. It is a hungry beast. It is the teacher of all our people. It says to the girl: "If you want to buy and to enjoy, come to me; I have goods, comforts, beauties for sale."

The result of this restlessness on the part of young women, their desire to wander from the home town, is a great impoverishment of the life of the country. It is true that it is an effect itself of a poverty of ideals; but it is a cause of a social poverty which every one feels who lives in the country. Young men are of course discouraged who might prefer country life. They are called away to the cities and towns by the affections that would build homes in the country if the daughters of the farm loved it even as well as the sons

do. The boys follow to the city, both because their proper mates are there and because they share the instincts of the women—which, although I have attributed them to the girls, are to a lesser degree possessed by the boys also. The boys, too, want to consume other men's goods. The teachers of the time declare that the farm and the village are fit only to produce.

Life in the country is harder, too, for the aged. For the values and the joy of life are given it by women. They are the artists, the beautifiers, the makers of comforts. When one is old he ceases to care for goods and wants the values of goods. He loses interest in a fat beef-creature and wants to eat at a perfectly appointed table. He has not the joy he had in a flock of sheep; he wants to wear a well-fitting suit of clothes and be told that he looks well in it. It takes a woman to tell him that, above all a daughter. Alas for the old farmer whose daughter is toiling in a factory town that she may have a room of her own, furnished as she wants it!

There are medicines for the restlessness of young women, I suppose; though one who has had experience of it knows too much to make large claims. I would send the daughters of the farm traveling. Let them see many places, especially cities, factory towns, business houses. They may come home better pleased with their own place. In any case they must not be penned up, forbidden, repressed. The excursion will serve as vocational guidance, to help them decide where they are to live with the fewest regrets in after years. Books will do it. The moving pictures, if good taste is used by the parents and teachers in selection, will do much; that

is their social use. We want to keep only those girls on the farm and in the village who will gladly stay there, with real love and understanding.

But the real remedy must come in a complete reversal of the policy of government departments and of the public schools, farm journals, and county agents. Why should they forever voice the city's greedy demand, "produce, produce, produce"? The main purpose of the farm and of the lovely village is to live, to consume, and to enjoy. To see the values of life is more religious than to increase the goods. Men of good taste can be poor and happy. But the mere producers are most unhappy. Toilers, the more they have the more they complain. The farmer has an advantage over other laborers in that he owns or expects to own his home, which is to him a thing of beauty as well as a mine of wealth. Until Americans cease to command the farmer to mine the soil, and until his teachers learn to teach him to get joy and value out of his own goods and comfort out of the goods that others produce, we shall have discontented women, and girls will say, "I want to leave the farm, . . . because I live on one."

There is a new spirit in the farmer's wife in these days. Farming has taken on the aspect of a new adventure. Its possibilities in the way of consumption of goods to create pleasure and comfort are greater than they were thirty years ago. The women see even a better future for their daughters. In 1922 an inquiry sent to ten thousand farm women by the "Farmer's Wife" brought back about eight thousand answers to the question, "Would you desire your daughter to

marry a farmer?'' and the great majority were in the affirmative.

To-day another great contribution to the spiritual value of the private household ministrations is offered in the new uses of electric power. Already the "servantless house" is widely advertised. The grave difficulties in household adjustment made by the growing unwillingness of competent girls and women to do anything in the household of strangers, and thereby giving rise to the serious "servant-girl problem" for people of limited means, are being mitigated by the new devices of this modern wizard electricity. It seems to many of us that had this magician been discovered before the invention of steam-power-driven machinery, the whole tendency of modern industry would have been turned not so absolutely, if at all, toward the factory. Such modifications of domestic manufacture and handicraft as right use of electricity could have initiated, might have prevented some of the social and economic evils of our present labor world. However that may be, it is clear that now the modern housewife has at her hand the means of easy control of her special family duties such as no ancient woman could have conceived.[3]

In country churches women are not much more numerous than men. This surprising statement may be verified at a church meeting in the open country. Statistics support it which show that church membership and church attendance in the country are about equally divided between the sexes. ''At the morning service 39 per cent. are adult women; 31 per cent. adult men;

[3] "The Family and Its Members," Anna Garlin Spencer. Lippincott.

25 per cent. are members under twenty-one years of age, and the remainder are children. In the evening, adult men and women in equal proportion make up three-fifths of the audiences."[4] The reason is probably not found in a more general reverence and piety among the men, but in the suppression and silence of the women. Farmers' wives cannot move so freely as farmers can. Until use of the automobile became general, they had to depend upon the men for a vehicle, and even now, with convenient motor transportation, fewer women drive abroad than men. It is still true, therefore, that the attendance upon a country church on the part of the women is proportionally less than in the town or city.

The woman in a church represents management. The part of the church the women have made for themselves is the best managed. They contribute to the management of the congregation very often, when it is small and weak, the improvements which good managers would devise.

Women have their own type of management.[5] Compromises do not embarrass them. Abstract theory does not engage their minds. They are said to have intuition in judgment, and they undoubtedly do take every short cut to their objective. They are skilled in expediency; opportunitism is natural to them. They deal not with a theory imposed upon things but with

[4] "Tested Methods in Town and Country Churches," E. de S. Brunner. Doran.

[5] "Women and Civilization," Ramsay Traquair, "Atlantic Monthly," Sept., 1923.

care of persons and things so direct and particular that theory has no voice. Women, moreover, in their administrative work are democratic and simple with one another. They have developed a high degree of fellowship of women with women.

Yet from the chief offices of the church women are generally excluded. Open-country churches show the lack, in their equipment and state of repair, of the very element which women could contribute. Village churches probably show their superiority to open-country churches in a better management; for which women are responsible. There are more women than men in villages, as Paul Douglass has observed in "The Little Town."

> There are few jobs and a surplus of unmarried women. . . . The conditions of town economy do not compel universal matrimony, which is a fundamental condition of rural life. Consequently the little town harbors more than its share of "old maids." For this reason no other type of community can command so large a voluntary force for its idealistic purposes; church, women's clubs and all pursuits of ideals find an army of women with some measure of leisure and desire to be useful, ready to be mobilized for service. . . . Here is the most plentiful and unhurried supply of workers—if not the most competent—for every good work.

The village women have a freedom from toil and a mobility of action which women on the farms have not, so that they can and do give the churches in the villages an attention the farmers' churches never get. The lawns are therefore cut before and around the

church, the buildings are painted, the floors are freshly carpeted, the pulpit platform is so cared for that the eye of the worshiper may rest upon it with comfort.

These things are not done for the open-country church. Its repairs are those which "a practical man" would see the need of. Shingles, paint, and some devices for light and heat, seats that are comfortable, and conventional chancel furnishings are in the man's judgment sufficient. Most open-country churches have no sexton or janitor regularly employed to sweep and dust the floors and seats and care for the grounds, and to have the building heated in time for the services of worship.

Women on the farms are under a patriarchal social control. Rule by elders has for ages been the manner of tillers of the soil. In agriculture there is no equality between the sexes. Recognizing the place which women occupy in the church life of the country as a whole, the contribution they make in management, the capacity for care of materials which they have, their power of accomplishment, is it not fair to suppose that the country church which suffers from the lack of these things is in need of what women could give?

The rural churches have in the past exercised themselves in disputation, in legal arrangements, all dear to a man's heart. They have suffered from lack of what women most cherish: management, care of details, perfection of equipment, comfort and beauty.

This ignoring of the contribution women are peculiarly fitted to make is not confined to the church. It is rooted in the farm economy itself. It is even idealized

in much of the teaching presented to the farm women by the State universities. It is the tradition that the woman shall be a lesser man, producing as he does but responsible for the trifling products of the farm, such as eggs, butter, and small fruits, for which he "has not the time." She has been expected to make the garden—if, indeed, any is made. In limited sections she milks the cows. It is said that in the southern Appalachians cows are afraid of the men. This is probably an ironic expression, cryptic, the meaning of which does not appear to a woman until humor comes with age! Generally the farmer is a patriarch in whom centers the ownership, who holds the purse and determines the expenditures of the household group. If the woman has money to spend, she too often has to make it out of her secondary forms of production. Witness the fact that she has brought the total value of poultry products up to that of wheat. But always she is a lesser producer; never is she generally admitted to have a function of her own that might be equal as a rule and greater in the end than that of the man.

The woman is the economist, and her sense of the values of life exalts the use of goods to as high a place as the production of them. She cannot forever be content with the raising of the biggest hog or the production of the mammoth potato. She craves for her family better clothes and the pleasures of the mind. If she did not there would be no civilization, for God has made no other consumer; she is the artist of the household. So that she became the leader of the revolt against the tedium of American country life in the last decade of

the nineteenth century. She insisted upon moving to town at a time when the prices of farm lands were increasing, because she was willing to sacrifice profit in order to live in a community where a school was to be had, a library and a store. The retired farmer's wife made herself the responsible head of the house. She canceled her husband at fifty, in order that their own children might have a chance with the best in the next generation. She usually outlived him, because in town she had about as much to do as she had on the farm, while he had nothing for which he was fitted. She enlarged upon such cultural opportunities as she found there, and he had no equal interest in village ways or gatherings. She was sweetened and satisfied. He was embittered and narrowed.

The regeneration of the farm industry awaits the attainment of a place of consumer by the woman equal to that of producer, which befits the man.[6] It is the finer part of woman to create comforts, the coarser part of man to produce raw materials. She is the cook, he the tiller and the cultivator. He tends the sheep, she cards and spins and weaves the wool into the stuff of which clothing is made by herself and her maids. Today she is no less the consumer, who destroys goods to create contentment, when she prepares the meal and sets before her man and her children the food which is their chief daily satisfaction. She makes the beds. She sees that the house is attractive. Rest and comfort and re-

[6] "The Economic Function of Woman," Edward T. Devine. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University. New York, 1910.

ward are hers to create. She is the consumer. Her husband is the producer. But the ends of life and its goal are hers to attain. The means are his and he can never attain a goal. The church that is made up of mere producers is at the mercy of every economic change. The security of a country church is increased and its risks lessened by the attainment of a place, on the part of women, of power to consume goods to the end of comfort and satisfaction in the home. But this must first be the experience of the farm-house before it can take place in the church.

The woman on the farm should be the partner of her husband, her office that of economist. Her share in management should be the keeping of accounts, the discussion of expenditures, the discrimination between alternative uses of money. She should be the farmer's daily adviser in all decisions, upon the purchase of a tool or of a plaything. She should be responsible for special wisdom in the decision to buy an automobile instead of a truck. Her judgment should be trained for the weighing of the family's need of a piano instead of eighty additional acres of land.

If women on farms in the United States were the economists of the farm and the home, the country churches would doubly profit. For, first, the farms would prosper and the church would share in their profit; and, secondly, the influence of women in the community would grow, and so the churches in the fields would enjoy better management. They would be better kept, more thriftily financed, and their properties would be a joy to the eye, their inner furnishings a comfort to

the weary soul. We are convinced, therefore, that there should be a revolution in the control of the country church. Women should be freed from restrictions which shut them out of office-holding in the churches.

The freeing of women for office-holding in churches is not enough, but it should go forward because it will be a part of the liberation of women from restrictions in the farm economy itself. The whole movement is one. It is an extension to the rural society of that change which has enabled women in towns and cities to take a place, if the individual woman chooses it, on equality with men. Here it should take the form of partnership in the business of the farm, regarding the use of money for materials, this partnership to be consistent with differentiation of labor. It should consist also of equality in the church, so far as the officers of the congregation are concerned. This reform is important for the peculiar contribution that women can make.

There is a new basis for the education of women in the learning of the universities at the present time. Within the past decade measurement has been made of the farmer's income. Agricultural economics has upon this basis extended itself in the universities. In almost every State studies of labor income have been published, showing how much the farmer has to spend. The movement has swiftly become universal and recorded itself in the income-tax blank furnished by the Government for calculation of the income of the farmer. All these measurements are in a manner peculiar to the industry of agriculture. We waited a long time for them because no economist could at first devise a way for expressing

the income of the farmer; until Professors Warren and Livermore studied intensively the business of farmers in Tompkins County, New York.[7]

Women should be taught the lessons of farm economics because theirs should be the expending of the income. Country churches might well hold classes for the study of the income. The pulpit of a country church should not hold itself above this matter, if the argument we are considering is sound. For the development of the farmer's wife must proceed in the direction of partnership with her husband on the farm and equality with any man in the church. The objective in this reform is the enlistment of the abilities of women in the service of the church of the open country which has hitherto been managed by men only.

The other discipline for the training of women is that generally called "Home Economics." It has gone under a variety of names and it has taken many starts. The program of Home Economics at the present time is undecided but full of zeal. The women employed by the government departments and by the universities are following lines of expediency rather than of educational principle. They seem to be doing whatever chores any one requires of them. They prepare their teaching program with the purpose of teaching young women to teach Home Economics rather than to marry farmers. Until the teaching of Home Economics is organized upon a clear understanding of the farm home, an outsider may not in this connection quote those who

7 "An Agricultural Survey," Warren and Livermore. Bulletin No. 295, Cornell University, College of Agriculture. 1911.

teach the subject; but it is obvious that the proper purpose of this department is the training of women for life in small communities and particularly in farm homes.

One who reads the bulletins discovers that year by year there is an increasing demand for instruction in the art of spending money. At first the women employed in extension work were bidden by their directors to teach farmers' wives how to produce more. The requests that come from country communities, however, call for instruction in the decoration of houses, the designing of clothing, the improvement of the farm-house grounds, and the training of children. All these are in the direction of getting satisfaction. It would appear that on a farm a man's business is to create goods, the woman's business is to create contentment. Each in a measure shares the other's function. But between the man and the woman on the farm there is a distinction: his part is the increase of wealth, hers is the destruction of wealth for the purpose of getting satisfaction. He is the producer, she is the consumer.

Religion is obviously nearer the work of the woman, for religion is for most persons a quest of happiness, of comfort. Only the few quieter souls see religion as a creative act and express their faith in God as a Provider. To most men, and for all men on most occasions, religion is a quest of joy and worth, so that what the women can do is the more popular and valuable religious work. She ought therefore to be enlisted in the church for the services peculiar to her—the creation of serenity, harmony, and contentment. These will come

through management, through artistic efforts the end of which is beauty, the creation of materials suitable to the common small daily needs.

The farm offers to a woman the opportunity to influence her children in a way she cannot in a town or city. The boys and girls of the farm are her children, while those of the city are the children of the school, of the gang, and of the street. Spiritually and intellectually she develops her children in her own life, which pervades the farm-house, occupies the Sundays, and gives character to the evenings. Whoever was born on the farm remembers the Sundays on which a devout mother gathered the small children together and set off with them perhaps for the grove surrounding the spring, there to tell them stories, read to them, or sing with them, as her character and their promptings determined. They were alone with her and dependent upon her; in the free hours of the day of rest she yielded to her inclination to cherish them and make them her own.

It is true that the youth of the farm do not spend evenings and Sundays at home, in these days of motoring, so much as they used to; but the children under sixteen do not drive cars. There has been no change in their dependence upon the farm home. One must not suppose that because "autos have come as a new factor in farm life" they are in use every night. Farmers have always had vehicles. The youth of 1890 had a fast horse to drive, and the boy of to-day differs only in that he may go to town in less time, or to a town farther away. He is surrounded by the same conditions

that surrounded his father. The isolation of the farm gives the wife and mother extraordinary power to influence character. The farm woman is the ideal mother. The infancy of her children is prolonged to the maximum. The extent and variety of her contacts are the greatest. While all the time she has spread out around her a school laboratory and a playground that awaken her children's minds, stir their inquiry, and under her easy guidance form their characters.

There are, according to Anna Garlin Spencer, "four duties the mother cannot delegate." They are personal tendance that gives a child a motive to live; breast feeding with its consequent emotions; instruction in the decencies and early practice in posture and talk; the teaching of obedience and of initiative.[8] A fifth is formal education, which she shares with teachers who are substitute mothers. Chief of these is motherhood's devotion to child life—that selective and partial affection which secures for each child one adult person at least to whom he or she is supreme in interest.

I am aware that this chapter has presented only certain aspects of the life of women in the country. I do not ignore the number of women who manage farms, which in 1920 was 4.1 per cent. of all farm operators. But I am seeking the sources of religious experience which are discovered in the farm family, with its intense interaction of feeling and sympathy, its saturation by tradition. There is no evidence that the industry of agriculture can be carried on generally by women

[8] "The Family and Its Members," Anna Garlin Spencer. Lippincott.

or that the farmer's church benefits by their attainment of a place as producers. If, however, that is to be a greater factor in the future than in the past, then my contentions are still further strengthened, that the farmer's church should study those interests of most concern to women and advance women to a higher place in control.

CHAPTER VII

DOMESTIC ANIMALS AND PLANTS

AN intimate bond unites man and his domestic animals—as close as the dependence of these beasts upon domesticated plant life. Animals and plants interpret nature to man. They find in him a protector of the high sort man finds in the Almighty. Man is their lord. One might fancifully say of the situation that the plants and animals have their religion in domestication; that the farm is their place of worship, the barn their temple, and man their god. However that may be, these lesser creatures are mighty factors in man's religious and moral progress. With the improvement of maize early South Americans became cultured. The production of wheat and the other small grains characterized the early centuries of the growth of the ancient Roman state; and vineyards took the place of wheat-fields during the Empire. Social students declare that the spiritual experience incident to the keeping of cattle was the cause of the emergence of many peoples from savagery to barbarism. Polygamy was the domestic system of cattle-herders: monogamy with its finer code of morality became possible only in connection with a closer tillage of the field crops.

In our times the elevation of more than one people to

a position of social justice and intelligence has been accomplished by means of a better control of dairy cattle, hogs, poultry, and field crops. Denmark's rejuvenation after 1864 was not accomplished without the rebuilding of her dairy herds, to the doubling of their butter-fat production. Perfecting the care of hogs and of poultry accompanied this social revolution. By the sale of these products the nation has become rich. But the Danes practised a better way of life by improving their dependent creatures. The attainment of their present position among the happiest, richest, most literate peoples in Europe is timed with the perfection of their pork products, their eggs, and their butter. The spirituality of the Danes at the very time they had conquered the market-places of Europe is shown by the bold proposal now under consideration in their legislature for disarming their country. They are among the first of the nations to choose peace. They have learned much in sixty years of working with the Creator in the care of the kine and swine and poultry.

Indeed, it may be questioned whether a people can so surely improve themselves in any other way as by the betterment of inferior creatures. If one may include children among inferior creatures, and compare domestic animals to children, it might well be maintained that the best hope of bettering social life is that of education for the child, selective breeding for the cow, the hog, and the hen, perfect tillage for the corn and the fruit-tree, and scientific feeding for all these dependents of man.

A man can study the betterment of his inferior creatures, and may carry out programs for their breed-

ing that will conserve and intensify precious traits in successive generations. He may by feeding and training increase their production in any one generation. Such improvements are impossible in himself and his fellows. But by improving his dependent children and animals, his inferior creatures, he may better himself, his family, and, if his neighbors coöperate, his community. If his nation as a whole undertakes the improvement of children, animals, and domestic plants, the whole nation will improve. This is a spiritual process. More than the undoubted economic gains are the immeasurable moral experiences that a man has in the administration of living creatures that cry in his fields and breathe in his stables; while he ponders the mystery of life that is in them and in himself.

A census of the live stock of the country shows "that the center of the swine population is at the Mississippi River, the center of the cattle population is at present in Western Kansas, and of the sheep in Western Nebraska. In the case of dairy products, their center is in Western Illinois, but the center of the human population is in Western Indiana." In each case the center of live-stock population is hundreds of miles west of the center of human population. The census reveals a change that has come over the Eastern States, which as a rule are "almost wholly depopulated of dairy cattle, swine, and sheep." Along the Atlantic seaboard there is, as a rule, "only one-tenth of beef cattle per capita, and a similar proportion is found in the case of swine and sheep." On the Pacific coast "the proportion is about two-tenths and three-tenths head per capita.

The densest population of animals even in the middle West only equals the human population. Only one State east of the Mississippi River has a head of dairy cattle per capita. Throughout the rest of New England and in Pennsylvania, the proportion is less than two-tenths per capita. Fifty million people in the United States live in non-productive sections far from the meat and dairy supply."

Children love animals and, as a matter of course, expect them to go to heaven when they die. Good teachers desire to use animals as aids in the training of children. They see that between the child and the animal are sympathy and understanding more varied and more forceful than have yet been established between the child and the adult. The mature animal is very often the child's teacher, and always is his spiritual monitor in those ways of life that are common to all flesh. Parents of distinction in the affections of Americans, like President Theodore Roosevelt and Governor Alfred E. Smith, have taken with them, into the executive mansions provided for rulers, "menageries" of pets cherished by the children of their large families. The interest of the admirers of these public men in animals has been a testimony of the unexpressed confidence we have in the spiritual value of the beast as a helper and a tutor of personality.

But what can all this mean for the farmer's church? Is there any practical use the rural congregation can make of its animal population? I am not sure that I can fully answer the question. If the creatures about a farm are a solemn trust, it is worth while to state that

truth, quite aside from its immediate use in a church program. It is a plea for the religion of country places. It interprets the spirit of the country. It may mark the sources of religious feeling and—if you will be utilitarian—may suggest subjects of study for those who would feel after God. The practical man, if he reads this chapter, may find a reason for promoting the breeding and care of cattle on Eastern farms. There may be in this a new challenge to Americans to renew the tillage of the acres about Eastern cities, if only for the spiritual gain that will surely come to our sorely depressed spirits.

I am aware that I am making a plea for the small farm, on which alone the best economic results can be attained in the dominion of man over the beasts and the plants. The diversified farm depends for its profit upon the production of from three to five farm goods for the market. It employs the dairy cow as the foundation of its system. Her milk enriches the diet and assures a steady cash income, and her manure enriches the soil. With cows in the stall the continuance of the farmstead is assured, because its productiveness improves year by year. The small farms are the sure support of the farmer's church.

I saw in Santa Rosa, California, the tiny acreage on which Luther Burbank has wrought wonders in the domestication of wild species of plants, and the increase of the productive power of plants already domesticated. It seems to me a symbol of the little homesteads throughout the United States whereon lesser miracles have been wrought by humbler creators all over the land.

Association with animals has in the past generated its appropriate religious feeling. In mountainous Palestine and in mountainous Scotland the Lord is a herdsman and man is a domestic animal. The Bible is filled with the religious expressions of shepherds. The prophet Amos was a cowherd, Moses had his vision while keeping sheep. In all these instances the occupational thought had as much to contribute as in the case of Jesus the carpenter, or Saul the tent-maker of Tarsus. It entered into the verbal expressions and the imagery of worship.

But the domestication of plants and animals has influenced more than the vocabulary and the imagery of religion. These creatures have provided a scaffolding upon which faith may rise to the heights. For the fruit-tree is an ambassador to mankind from the creatures that dwell in the forest. The vine is a delegate from the shrubs. The corn plant is a living creature of grace and dignity that comes to tell the story of the food plants upon which the beasts live. It has now no home except the cultivated field. Every farmer with imagination senses the mystic symbolism of his orchard and his field when he looks beyond bowing fronds and winding stems, to the wild woods where their greater kin lives in serene indifference to himself. He knows the Creator through imitation of creative ways in the work of the garden. The orchard is always like Eden to him. The tree of life that he reads of in the first pages of the Bible and the last, commends itself to his sense as a symbol of truth; for he, too, has wrought with trees. He knows that they declare when "their

voice is not heard." A minister in Ohio, who tilled four acres that lie between his manse and the churchyard, averred that he got his sermons on the two days of every week in which he farmed.

There is an appeal in wild creatures. At dawn we saw two deer scamper across the meadow from one bit of forest to another; and when they leaped the fence, in soaring ease, we felt something within us leap that we had known only in a dream. A whole neighborhood in Connecticut was interested when a wild goose settled upon the waters of their tiny lake and rested there for a day. All the men in hearing stop and look when a chopped tree crashes to the earth. The return of the robin is told in every house. The departure of the flocks of wheeling birds in the autumn is watched by every human eye. For these are symbols of life. We too live and would fly if we could.

The creatures that have attached themselves to man came of their own motion, probably, as Kipling playfully says in his "Just So Stories." Witness the bluebird and the phœbe-bird which build near farmers' houses. The jeering crow seems to like a human nearness, and has just about enough of it to suit his taste. Man and crow would miss each other if they were separated. The wren chooses human neighbors; she dramatizes some of our nervous ways to her own conceit and to our satisfaction.

But how much greater is our understanding of nature's mystery in the case of the beasts that breathe and bleat and bellow, and greet the morning with a shrill crowing! We should live in a reverie if it were

not for them. From the time of the awakening of the savage mind, the beasts have seemed akin to man; for naked tribes have reasoned that the snakes or the bears are their male parents. Each individual among them has his totem. With higher intelligence mankind becomes even more interested in the species of his lesser kindred, and makes laws to protect and conserve them. The savage revered his priest—his authority upon the genetic intricacies of totemism—and the cultured nations honor biologists because they give man an orderly relation to all things that live.

Farmers explain their love of country life in terms of this passion for life. "I like to feed hogs," a young tenant farmer in Missouri said to me; and an Illinois landowner thus explained his refusal to retire to town from a farm that paid him scant five per cent. on his investment: "I like to have charge of cattle—and women folks and my children." A great educator in the East "rested himself after a day in the University by the care of his herd of Alderney cows." It was not without significance therefore, that the horse-sheds stood alongside the country church in former days. The momentum which that church still has was given it in the time when the church, like the farm, was a coöperative endeavor of man and beast. There is not yet sufficient evidence that churches are generated in factory towns and mining communities, or motivated by gasolene.

The reason for the religious feeling that a man experiences in his work with domesticated creatures is probably the mystery that abides in their living ways. God is unknown to our senses, and we are moved to awe

by intelligent approaches to the unknown. As we see the way of knowledge approach ever nearer to the mystery, but never arrive, we feel a fear and a joy that are like unto the beginnings of prayer.

The belief in God as a provider is proper to the people who provide. Simple folk, who have little and do not accumulate, are prone to depend upon the care of a mysterious Power. For them the doctrine which idealizes poverty and dependence is very natural. Our rich cities are fascinated by the ideal of religion conferring benefits, which is popular nowadays,—and properly, too,—but poverty is the more general human expression. It has honorable mention in the Beatitudes. Poverty is a matter of universal human concern. This century of accumulated wealth will pass, but poverty can be relied on to remain with us. The doctrine of the poor will always be that God is a provider; and all farmers are providers for themselves and for others. Yet their provident efforts never quite overcome the forces of weather and moisture; which destroy the crops or make the land to produce a surplus, "as God wills." So that a farmer's wheat-field and his peach-orchard are never wholly obedient to his will. They move him the more deeply, the more he knows them. Never can he be as sure of "making them go" as a mechanic can be sure of starting a stalled automobile. No mechanical precision is ever attained in the care of subordinate creatures, because all the unknown forces of the earth and the sky range through them. The limits of knowledge and the unbounded depths of reality are even better known to the farmer than to the scientist.

The creatures that gather around the farm-house reflect also the mysteries of personality. The boy who cares for horses or cows sees an amazing reflection of himself in their looks, their passions, and their moods. They are like enough to men and women to give him knowledge of humans which humans would hesitate to impart concerning themselves. A Northwest Canadian farmer said, "I like to raise pigs, they 're so human." Their very brutishness, with personality crudely fashioned and not completed, stirs his curiosity concerning men.

There is a speech of Helen Keller, who was born blind and deaf, in which she traces the earliest gropings of her intelligence. The first teachers she had were not all humans. Before Miss Sullivan's eloquent fingers spoke in the child's palm, she had learned of fowls, and had been taught by the dog, the cat, and the pig in the farmyard. She said:

I cannot remember a time in my life when animals and I were not the best of friends.

I emerged from babyhood clinging frantically to the rough coat of my father's favorite hunting dog, a beautiful Llewellyn setter. Together Belle and I explored the garden. Together we fought our way through box-hedges and rose-trees. I am sure Belle was often puzzled to account for my peculiarities. She would watch me fall over objects with a troubled expression in her kind eyes. With remarkable intelligence she did her best to keep me out of trouble. She knew perfectly well that rose-bushes have thorns, and that thorns scratch children and tear their frocks. She would push and pull in her efforts to dissuade me from going

where it was not safe, but when I persisted, despite her most energetic resistance, she gave in and faithfully kept her place at my side, poking out her head in front to take observations and prevent, if possible, a bump or a tumble.

I loved Belle dearly. She was almost human in her patience and forbearance with me when I was only a little savage, more ignorant and apparently less capable of learning than my faithful companion in the great darkness.

I was fortunate enough to be born on a Southern farm, and I grew up among a multitude of domestic animals. It is no exaggeration to say that I spent the greater part of the years, before my education began, in the company of my barnyard contemporaries. My keen interest in everything that had life led my teacher to use the animals on the farm as object lessons. I absorbed language, satisfying my curiosity about living creatures. Hunting for the guinea hens' hidden nests, touching the cool, moist noses and threatening horns of the cows, holding the young pigs in my arms, feeding the great, strutting turkeys and feeling their feathers rise, like a flock of birds hovering close to the ground, being held on the back of a mule by one of the darky farmers when he plowed the cornfield—all these experiences imparted the liveliest reality to the words I learned.

A pair of red bantams was the delight of my heart. They were so tame they would stand on my knees billing and crowing, as much at home as if they were on the ground. One day the lady bantam most amazingly laid an egg in my lap.

The number and proportion of domestic animals on the farms may be taken as coefficient of elements essential to the country church. The farmer's animals may not be admitted bodily into the farmer's church, but figuratively they enter into the foundation of it. The

strongest churches are found among farmers in the sections in which the hog and the dairy cow, the hen and the mule are components of rural society.

The relation of domestic plants is not so close. The church is one remove farther from the plant than from the animal. Cotton and corn when raised as single crops do not build churches unless the organization of the latter is strengthened by sound coöperation. So fruit-culture without animal-culture is not religious. But the ideal basis for the farmer's church is the coordinated crop-and-animal husbandry which is represented in diversified farming of the best type.

The care of domestic animals is a bondage which imposes on the farmer a mode of life peculiar; he is set apart from other men by his tendance of cattle, of crops. These inferior creatures are productive only on condition that they have regular care. In the acts of feeding them, currying, cleaning their stables, milking, the farmer's routine is established. As to the domestic vegetables, planting, cultivating, spraying, and other processes which must be performed at the time appointed, by the nature of the growing thing create the orderly process of the year. These necessities arise in rhythm. The cow must be milked at intervals of twelve hours. The horse must be fed three times a day. Stables must be cleaned daily. Orchard trees must be sprayed after their blossoming, and at other times according to the parasitic dangers to which they are subject. The possibility of variation is slight.

The farmer has little freedom; he goes from one regular process to another. If he has well organized his

business, the exactions of one species will fit into the leisure time left him by another. Thus a dairy farmer is able to employ a labor force that leaves him hours of the day free for the cultivation of tobacco or the care of fruit-trees.

The exactions of domestic animals and plants determine the organization of the whole industry of agriculture; they contribute the elements of its routine. The social institutions of a farming community must be adapted to the routine that it is possible for the farmers of the neighborhood to follow. A church in a dairy country must adjust the times of its services and the frequency of its social gatherings to milking time, and must not confine people too frequently for long evenings who have to arise before dawn.

The family farm is a result of all the forces that control the tiller of the soil. It is an institution few reformers and theorists understand. Human beings would naturally go to live in towns. The American farmer lives in no town, but upon the isolated bit of land nearest to his barns and to the fields. The explanation is that the regular rhythm of cattle and of crops requires of him this nearness. Any other place of residence would put an impossible strain upon him and his family, or would mean neglect of the creatures which depend upon him for their care, as he depends upon their product for his living.

The family farmer is the most efficient social agent of agriculture. Just because the farmer gives personal care to animals and plants, that arouses in them the exceeding vital response which constitutes profit. With-

out his care they would produce as much as the wild creatures do, but by his personal tendance they produce an excess upon which civilization exists.

These domestic animals and plants give a profit to him who cares for their breeding, feeding, fertilization, and protection from parasites and diseases. The kind of care they must have is of the sort that an owner can give and a hireling will not. The incentive of ownership seems to be necessary for the breeding of superior cattle, for their profitable feeding, and for their protection from the many perils which assail them and threaten the loss of profit. The pure-bred stock of all species live a precarious life. They are capable at the best of furnishing a high margin of profit, but this profit is always in jeopardy. It can be saved only by such care as an owner will give and a wage-earner will not.

At least on an extended scale, reliance upon farm-hands, without the supervision of the owner, has proved impossible among farmers. In the Eastern States near the big cities are many farms owned by men of ample means, who hire farm-hands at a wage above what other owners can pay. They get the best hands, and employ them under the supervision of salaried managers. So far I have been unable to hear of any considerable number of these farms that have made a financial success; yet alongside of them are farms that survive and pay a living though a meager wage. The difference is in the motive with which the cattle and the field crops are cared for. Only a few very high-priced managers

have been able to offer an equivalent of the incentive of ownership which the farm-owner applies to his task. These very high-priced managers exhaust in their salaries the profit of the farm. The resident farmer, with perhaps one farm-hand or two under his eye, makes a tolerable economic success because he is interested as an owner in the attainment of that measure of success on which profit depends. This is the reason for the survival of the family farmer. It is a reason inherent in the nature of domestic animals and plants, which produce a surplus only if they have the personal care of a man or a woman who owns them.

This devoted care is the moral root of the agricultural industry; it is the conscious trusteeship for the soil and the crops and the beasts. Here is where the preacher in the country should apply his exhortation, yet few ministers discern the duty of the farmer to his animals, or say anything about it. There is in country churches a great deal of talk about the care of the "weak brother," but very little about the care of the dependent fellow creature. Farmers themselves, by the exigencies of their existence, are devoted to an extraordinary degree. What will they not do for a sick horse? What pains will they refuse to take for sheep in lambing time? What steps do they spare themselves in seeking a lost heifer? It is true their exertions are prompted by the desire for profit, but to stop at that point is to think very superficially of the farmer's motive. He does not see an immediate profit in so many dollars. On the contrary, he sees a living creature for which he is respon-

sible, whose suffering would make him ashamed. The loss of it would cause him to feel degraded in his own eyes and the eyes of his neighbors.

Jesus discerned this trusteeship and made much of it, in his parables referring to it very frequently. He described the man who went on a journey and left his estate in the care of servants. It is evident to the reader of the Gospels that the master regarded human life as a trust. Should not a country minister study the nature of the farmer's monopoly of land? Should not he have pronounced convictions upon the obligations inherent in the farm, to maintain the fertility of the soil, to preserve the forests, and to build up a high record of productiveness in field crops, and of excellence in cattle? Where else should the farmer excel if not in this? His responsibility to his wife is not more positive or measurable than his responsibility to the dairy cattle he owns. He has obligations to his children which ministers frequently preach about, but has he not also obligations to his sheep and poultry? Should not the excellence of swine in their use to mankind be extolled in church quite as frequently, if the church is among farmers, as the excellence of children is to be extolled, in terms of use to mankind? Every church in the country, therefore, ought to have an opinion so well known that none can escape it, as to the industrial performance of dairy cattle, the attainments of swine, the economic production of poultry. In the South the church ought to be an effective center of directing the attack upon the boll-weevil, and of diversifying the crops.

These things are not beneath the preacher if it be true that man's tillage of the cotton crop and his care of dairy cattle are spiritual experiences. Whoever observes a farmer steadily and regards the long hours of his immersion in the care of these lesser creatures, owns that he has a spiritual experience in these long hours. Religion is not something apart from the week-day toil. It is an experience within that toil. It is not a salvation from the world, transacted in an ecstatic moment on a rare occasion of revival, but is the diligent performance of trusteeship during long days and months of the master's absence, when no ecstasy is felt and only a sense of duty and remembrance holds the believer steady. We may thank God that the devout farmer in this is a better man than his preacher, for he behaves himself like a religious man during all the days of the week, and the country preacher generally practises a religion of ecstasy. He preaches the theory of life pivoted upon the rare moment. The American farmer has lived pretty honestly the religion of creation, but for one hundred years his preacher has loudly advocated the religion of release.

CHAPTER VIII

NEIGHBORS

THE indelible mark of rural society is made upon the farmer's church by the absolute acquaintance of neighbor with neighbor in the country. Each person knows about every other person all that can be known. It is characteristic of life on the farm that men are intensely interested in the people within driving distance of the farm on which they live, or the village in which the life of the farmers centers. This was true in the old days when neighborhoods were populous and families were large. Nowadays many strangers have come into the neighborhood and farmers of the old stock have moved away, yet the same intimacy in the details of life prevails. Every one who lives in the country expects to be known by his neighbors to a degree that surpasses the intimacy of acquaintance prevailing in any other type of community. The rich and the poor are mutually acquainted, even though they may be alien to one another in habits of life.

The country population is homogeneous in its daily processes; it is regulated by the conditions of the agricultural industry, in a routine of life common to all; so that each man's life is shot through, day by day, with the violet ray of neighborhood intelligence. There

is no escaping the curiosity of your neighbors. People are few, and each person is a concern to all the others. Besides, it is the custom for every man to surrender himself to his neighbors' knowledge of him. It goes with the agricultural industry. When a man moves to the city, he turns his back on his neighbors, on those he daily meets; when he lives on the farm, he is expected to turn his face to them and to disclose his business to all he daily meets.

It is a question if there is any other force at work in the country more powerful than this one. It gives character to every factor in the life of the country. It puts a limitation upon all alike and shapes the moral sentiments of every one living in the community.

This is what it means to have neighbors. One is in a physical nearness to the people on near-by farms; he is also in a propinquity of mind with them, because he and they possess a common knowledge, both mutual and objective; that is, they know one another with a thoroughness rare among men, and they are daily thinking about the same problems of marketing, sickness and health, schools, roads, cattle, and weather. The moral problems connected with religion, in these rural communities, would all be solved if the love of men for one another were as overwhelming as their knowledge of one another. Then, indeed, they would love their neighbor as themselves, for in country places people know their neighbors almost as well as they know themselves. Indeed, a man's self-knowledge is measured by the opinion his neighbors have of him.

It is almost impossible for any one in a country

community to act a part other than the part assigned to him in his neighborhood. If his neighbors think him a bad man, he expects to be and usually is just as bad as they think him. If he is thought good or benevolent or intelligent, or a sport or a horse-trader or a skilled mechanic, in that character he performs. He lives up to the idea his neighbors have of him. Years ago on Long Island there were in the small towns sea-captains who commanded whaling- and fishing- vessels, a generation now mostly passed away, with the concentration of shipping in the bigger cities. The story is told about one of these captains, then retired from the sea and managing his little farm, to whom approached a neighbor hitherto regarded as shiftless. This no-account person had been converted in a revival that then convulsed the village. He took his conversion seriously and, as he greeted the old captain, he expected to see a new light in the weather-beaten face of the respected old man. As if to set himself in a new place in the community, he said: "Captain, I am going to lead a new life; I am going to be honest and keep sober and pay my debts." To which the captain responded, "Who told ye so?" "Why, I have been converted. I have given my heart to the Lord." The captain looked the new convert steadily in the eye and without change of expression said, "Yer kain't do it!" That passed for the end of the incident on Long Island, because it was believed that the knowledge of the community transcended the grace of the Lord.

The mutual acquaintance of neighbors is not infallible. Communities often commit errors. The mind

of country people proceeds with confidence along the line of its estimate of individuals, and on the whole it is just and well informed, but it is not superior to false accusation nor above the hint of slander. In this respect communities develop ideas according to the degree of good judgment and tolerance possessed by their residents. For even in the best communities the standards of appreciation of individual conduct fall short and some persons are condemned because, while the community knows details of individual action, it possesses no scale for the weighing of action in the light of tolerance, freedom, and progress. The result is that the play of universal knowledge throughout a country neighborhood, while generally wholesome, has sometimes the effect of condemning the independent, bold, or unusual person. Country people, for all their knowledge of one another, possess no immunity to resentment or hatred or malignity. Of all men they are best able, I suppose, to discount prejudice of one against another so far as the play of independence goes, but they are not more free than other men from self-interest. The disposition to love one's neighbor as oneself and the higher ideal of protecting and benefiting one's neighbor are absent too often when universal knowledge plays upon the deeds of those who live so near to one another.

Every country neighborhood is, as a rule, split asunder by divisions that are personal and emotional. If the human spirit were as big as human experience, all country neighborhoods would have a unity co-extensive with their knowledge of one another. There would then be no duplication of community agencies. But

now we have at least two stores in every community, and every one prefers the one store to the other. We have usually two grain elevators, two lodges at least, and almost always more than one church. The place in which there is but one church is a place which is either extraordinarily obedient to the Christian spirit or unusually poor, so that the people cannot afford more than one. The cause may even be an indifference to religion. The people whose feelings clash and whose aversions are organized in a neighborhood conflict have no lack of knowledge of one another. They watch one another daily on the country roads, they meet one another in the village streets, they discuss one another constantly, because they have nothing else to look at or talk about but the men and women living in the place. But they have no agencies to unite them, nor a teaching and example effective to restrain the resentments and grudges that result from daily experience, so that they divide into at least two camps, as a matter of course.

In new communities in the West, for a short time there is a universal friendly feeling. The people are all away from home. There is no obvious difference to make them suspicious of one another in the beginning. There is no native inhabitant or old stock to be jealous of the new-comers or to be despised by the new-comers. So that for a time a pioneer community in the West boasts of its democracy and enjoys its like-mindedness. But unless it is organized for the exercise of neighborliness, fellowship, the forgiveness of offenses, the deliberate reconciling of those who suffer from the daily com-

petitions and conflicts, it may soon be rent by small feuds more bitter and more hateful and more active than those of an Eastern village.

This unneighborly contention is to many people unendurable. They can move about easily as strangers in a big city, but they cannot endure the hatefulness of immediate neighbors. They prefer the homesickness of a big town—where impersonal appeals in the theater and the moving-picture house, or the passing drama of the street engage their minds and make them forget the loneliness—to the hatred of one neighbor for another and the ostracism of one family by the community. I have no doubt that among the chief causes for the departure of many families from the country are the narrowness of mind and the meanness of spirit which separate neighbors whose mutual knowledge is complete. To know persons and not to like them is a denial of the highest human hope. It takes all the poetry out of life. It really denies the Christian faith. A man does not prove zealous for the Christian faith who finds country neighborhoods evil and unattractive, when to know a man is not to approve of him. A large part of the call and the charm of the big city is the genial humanity that good-naturedly assumes that all men are lovable, "all right," though one would not care to know them. In the country place one knows them and is expected to withhold his approval from them. The paganism of the country community is the cause of the feuds that divide one family from another.

Whatever its evils, the familiarity of neighbor with neighbor is a social process we cannot escape. It

expresses itself in a curious prying habit and a disposition to inquire candidly into every doing, every possession, every relationship of the persons within the neighborhood. It may be repugnant to some people, but nevertheless it goes on. When young men and women are caught by the mating instinct, they must guard very carefully the details of their conduct, because everything they do will be known and published by the unflagging curiosity of their neighbors. In a big city a young man may sit in a public park with his arm about his sweetheart and the passers-by will give him scarce a glance. In a country neighborhood, if a young man walks on the public road from one house to another with a young woman, the fact is published from house to house, in the days that follow, and its significance is carefully weighed in the scales that every mind possesses. It has its due meaning. In remote mountain communities the code of conduct is as rigid and exacting as the behavior of persons at the court of St. James or in the ceremonies of the Vatican.

There is always just one way to do anything and a departure from that way has a meaning invariable. The limited experience of the neighbors in isolated communities makes them seem intolerant, but they are adhering to the code of conduct they understand. The peculiarity of country communities is not a low standard of life or a meanness of spirit, but a code of manners based upon limited knowledge of the world. The penetration of the whole community with the white light of universal knowledge and its attendant curiosity, with the consequent judgment upon every man

day by day, renders the task of the minister, the schoolteacher, or the public-health nurse in a rural community very difficult. I have known devoted women, going to live and work in the country, to sacrifice the game of cards which they had enjoyed for years of an evening and to give up the occasional dance that has been innocent enough, just because the people in the country had not scales in which cards or dancing could be weighed with approval. In order to render service among country people and to enjoy their friendly approval, these women sacrificed cheerfully pleasures that were to them of less value than the esteem of their country neighbors. The problem of rural social organization, and especially the problem of the country church, is bound up with the fact of universal inescapable knowledge. He who lives in the country must realize that his doors and windows are open all the time. Whatever he does, from dawn to dark and even at midnight, will be known next day throughout the whole neighborhood.

This familiarity of neighbor with neighbor has a physical boundary. It extends to all the farms whose owners are, by the conditions of trade and by the movements of the agricultural industry, in the habit of meeting. These farmers and the members of their families who regularly and periodically meet, these are they who are acquainted with one another. So that the neighborhood extends as far from the natural trading center as the weekly drive to market or the daily journey for the delivery of milk. Nowadays, with motor transportation, the boundaries of the community are some-

what extended, but the hauling of farm produce and not the pleasure ride in the family automobile is the determining factor in acquaintance. One finds neighbors best acquainted along the road by which they pass weekly, perhaps daily, to the market center. The people who thus are bound together by mutual acquaintance constitute the neighborhood. These are they who ought to love one another as fully as they know one another. These are the people who ought, and in the old time used, to sustain the country church. The chief service of a church is to enable them to love one another as well as they know one another.

How dear are neighbors? Dearer than kindred or friends or children, when, added to the genial ties of daily intercourse, there are the bonds of religious duty and joy. Then one loves his neighbors as himself. Neighbors are as dear as personality is.

The love of neighbors requires a symbol in the sight of all men. Small towns need a public and visible token of neighborliness. And in many communities throughout the country—so many as to be enumerated now by the United States Department of Agriculture [1]—there are community houses erected for a useful purpose but always with something in their architecture to indicate the genial, homely love one has for those who are on the same level with himself. For instance, at Novato, Cali-

[1] See four pamphlets published by U. S. Department of Agriculture: "Rural Community Buildings in the U. S." (Bulletin 825); "Plans of Rural Community Buildings" (Bulletin 1173); "Organization of Rural Community Buildings" (Bulletin 1192); "Uses of Rural Community Buildings" (Bulletin 1274).

fornia, is a community house erected, as a tribute to the neighborly spirit of this town, by the only Protestant church in the place. The whole house is pervaded by the spirit of the pastor, the Rev. Charles Christensen. It is ample in its provision of a score of rooms for neighborhood purposes. It contains a theater, and, besides, a generous lobby with a fireplace. It has two parlors in which committees or societies may meet. It has a great kitchen from which meals may be served to any room in the house, large or small. The stage of the theater has the widest span of any in that section of California and is furnished for the presentation of plays. It is often used as the platform of the orchestra when the auditorium is filled with dancers. The exterior of the building, while modest in all its lines, is gracious and beautiful, expressing welcome in the aspect it shows to the visitor from any direction, as it stands in a conspicuous position in the village.

At Vernon, New Jersey, is a community house erected for the parish house of St. Anne's Episcopal Church, but for many years used freely as a community house, under the control of the Board of Trade. It has always been sensitive to the spirit of the neighborhood and devoted to the most popular regulation and enjoyment.

A good illustration of the simplest form community house is a pavilion in the yard of the church at Kreutz Creek, near York, Pennsylvania. It is an unheated, open shelter, available only in the summer, under the care of the sexton of the church, who lives in a house on the church grounds. The expense connected with it, aside from the original cost of construction, is negligible. Its

repair or up-keep will never be a tax upon the community, made up of men skilled in all the homely trades.

At Sergeantsville, New Jersey, is a one-time hotel which was for years a road-house used by those driving to market in that populous farming country. At the coming of prohibition it was purchased for the Methodist Episcopal Church, by a Trenton business man, Mr. Frank J. Apple, who owns a farm in the community. The Rev. J. M. Jocqueath managed it personally for about five years. He first rebuilt the interior, to give ampler space for meeting-rooms, library, and church parlors, leaving a few guest-rooms for hire to residents in the community and a small suite for the caretaker to live in. In spite of the difficult problem of whether or not to permit dancing here, this community house has been a success and a satisfaction to every one except to the burdened minister himself. It stands as a pledge of the loyalty of the Methodist Episcopal Church to the spirit of brotherly love, in an old community not lacking in divisions.

This new movement of the religious spirit is expressing itself in all parts of the nation, in obedience to no central impulses, except those released by the World War. Its roots, however, are deeper than those of war. Indeed, it expressed itself in the "huts" erected by service agencies for the soldiers at the front. It goes back at least fifty years in the experience of the Young Men's Christian Association and is an expression of the teachings of the churches which often the churches themselves are unwilling to embody in material form. At the beginning of the World War the churches in some West-

ern States were caught unawares by the public desire to minister to the soldiers. The Red Cross was a society alert for emergencies. In some communities of the far West, in the beginnings of the Red Cross work in 1917, the churches were opposed to it because in the raising of funds this society got the people together and provided music for dancing, to which the churches were on principle opposed. Before the end of the war, however, the spirit of joint service brought all these communities together in united action for their sons and brothers at the front. It cannot be doubted that the war gave form and power to this movement of brotherhood.

The community house that expresses this spirit must be a place where saints and sinners can meet. Therefore, it differs from the parish house that preceded it, in that it is managed generally by a board independent of any one church. The examples just mentioned show that the community house can be provided by a church if its spirit is tolerant and its brotherly kindness includes all. Probably the community houses of the future will more frequently be under the indirect control of the church than under its immediate ownership and care. These houses, symbols of the Christian spirit and universal love, must contain certain uniform features, such as a place for cooking and eating together outside domestic limits, ample for the use of all who may attend. Beyond this simple provision each house must comprise the cluster of facilities needed in that particular place, such as ample room for lectures, for games, for the showing of motion pictures, and in some communities a gymnasium and a basket-ball ground. The

community house must always be a means of quick response to the need of brotherly intercourse.

This spirit is not new among country people. Wherever there are in the country families who worship God and are attentive to the Divine Spirit, the people are accustomed to caring for the weaker members of the community and meeting emergencies. The neighborly spirit is not only a latent kindliness as extensive as acquaintance is: it forms its ruts and grooves of custom as firm and sure as institutions are, in an old rural community that has heard the Gospel. The value of the community house is only in its embodiment of this spirit in a material form, and in the provision of those facilities necessary for the homely uses of fellowship.

The reason for building community houses is found in the fact that many strangers come and go, in and out of the rural community. Acquaintance is not so uniform or so universal as it was. There must be found a means outside the household for democratic fellowship and neighborly expression such as would not lead to invitations to dinner or culminate in intermarriage. In the old days a farmer might expect his son to marry the daughter of any neighbor. This is not so to-day, with Protestants and Catholics living in the same community. With foreigners from another stock, and mountaineers from a hostile and peculiar section of the country, dining together or intermarriage is unwelcome and is often regarded as impossible. If the community, therefore, is to be neighborly and men are to love their neighbors as themselves, they must erect some house that expresses neighborly but not kinship privileges. The

community house has thus become a more precise organ of obedience to the Scriptural command and the modern spirit than our fathers possessed in their own homes. We practise in these days an obedience which kinship would not require, nor the people of a homogeneous community expect to perform.

CHAPTER IX

ART AND PLAY

STRANGE that churches so austere as the American Protestant churches are should organize their community program first in forms of play! The reason given by them is usually this: that their recreational programs are intended as a discipline to save their young men and women from sin. This is a sound reason. When a church officer used to say, "We organize this work to keep the young men from the saloon and the billiard hall," he meant that the mystery of sin must be humanly administered. He did not as yet face the full meaning of what he had done. He acted under distress and in an expedient way.

Very often recreational work is done by church people without reasons being given. The most common form is the church dinner or supper. Few people are so austere that they do not eat together. There is little dispute among church members about church dinners, so far as they are used for a recreational and not a monetary purpose.

The next most frequent organization of play is in socials, as they are called. These gatherings for amusement and the extending of acquaintance are well nigh universal among the smaller churches of the country. They are largely the work of committees of the Sunday-

school classes and young people's societies. Some churches are organized for the systematic presentation to the community of a hospitable spirit. The purpose of social gathering is talk; conversation and free intercourse are made possible for those who have little to say and are shy by reason of their isolated work and rustic reserve. The long silences in which men and women live in the country, whatever their task, prepare them for the lively meetings in which they can talk and discuss, if the ice is only broken.

Some churches have deliberately undertaken to celebrate the holidays of the round year. A great English rector gave thanks for the calendar of the church, because in the course of the year, he said, the congregation was reminded of every phase of human experience. The lives of the saints to whom days are made holy furnished to him a complete index to human emotion. But American churches have been reserved in their use of holidays, even of Christmas and Easter. Beginning with no saints' days and indifferent as most of them were to the civil holidays, they have been slow to value great emotional celebrations. There is among them an increase in the intensity of celebrating the birth of our Lord and the day of His resurrection—ancient festivals both. They do not adequately make use of Thanksgiving Day even now, and the holidays of the year such as Decoration Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, and the birthday of Washington pass without notice in most of the small congregations. This is a real loss, for the value of these days to the religious spirit would be very great.

We believe it would be well if American churches should sanctify the special days of rest of the American year. These churches are organized upon the recognition of the commonwealth, to which they offer a supplement but not a substitute. Therefore the churches should stress the celebration of holy days which are dear to all the people. These days are consecrated to the awe and fear, the thanksgiving and the dependence of the people upon God, Who gives to mankind out of his mysterious providence great men and deliverances from fear.

The last two decades have seen many churches represented on the athletic field. Protestant as well as Catholic congregations have sent out their teams to compete in the non-commercial games. Not a few ministers have seized on this expedient as a measure by which to counteract Sunday recreation. I remember well the first minister who organized a baseball team, exacting of each member a promise that he would not play ball on Sunday so long as he was on the church team. The victories won by this team were regarded as providential support of the minister's program. In the small cities some churches are organizing gymnasiums for baseball in the winter and for public gatherings of a general sort. These gymnasiums may be used by the church on many occasions. Some of them are simple buildings without beauty but suited to rough and joyous use by the playful spirits of the congregation.

Of music one can say no less than that it is a highest expression of the spirit to which we are referring. Mu-

sic is the voice of man concerning the mystery of existence. "For music flings on mortals its infinite disdain." It is the ultimate expression of the feeling which words cannot express. Music is that one of the arts to which the crudest churches are converted. They may resist all other appeals of beauty, but they do not deny music. It alone was not forgotten by those stern Highlanders who became lodged in the Appalachians when the westward trails which went that way at first were abandoned. They retained the ballads of the Elizabethan English towns from which they had come. They still preserve their love of song in neighborhood "sings" to which men journey from afar and stay all day, joining in the volume of melody with a satisfaction that is pathetic. For the tunes are meaningless, and the words they sing are shallow. The spirit of music remains in the American people, from whom all the other arts were removed.

It would be well if more American churches followed the example of that at DuPage, Illinois, where Matthew Brown McNutt and his gifted wife began in 1900 a social ministry, under adverse conditions, with no more than the organization of a church choir. In ten years' time they had from that beginning unfolded a program that was so rich and varied as to prove contagious among American churches.

While the farmers' churches use such erotic verse and sensuous music as are found in the hymn-books distributed to them by irresponsible evangelists, they cannot hope for a development of their churches. Christian

spirituality is one and indivisible. It requires expression of faith and aspiration, not of rhythm and ecstasy. One of the first acts of a responsible pastor, who designs to give his life to his people as an earnest of the divine life for them, will be to replace the sentimental drivel and thumping music of the commercialized hymn-books with one of the excellent hymnals that are published by his denomination, or by any of the publishing houses which specialize in the supply of church music.[1]

Dramatic art is organized in many a church in the giving of a play at least once a year. The development of this new form of recreation began in the work of Professor A. G. Arvold at the University of North Dakota,[2] but it now has fairly general expression. Publishing houses have within a few years poured forth a profusion of one-act plays, amateur plays, and pageants. It would seem that Americans are taking hold with eagerness of the art of expression upon the stage. A change has come in our whole feeling of life that we can express only in this manner. Even when the artistic value of the performance is small, it may give great satisfaction to actors and audience. I saw "Everyman" presented in a county-seat town forty miles from the railway by rustic boys and girls. It was mostly crude and provincial in utterance, but for two hours this serious per-

[1] "Hymnal for American Youth," Century Co.; "Alleluia," Westminister Press; "Fellowship Hymns," Association Press; "Hymns for the Living Age," and "Hymns for the Open," Century Co.

[2] "The Little Country Theater," A. G. Arvold. Macmillan.

formance, without an opportunity for laughter, held the close attention of an audience which crowded the church.

This brief review is intended to summarize developments of the past two decades. How great the change is in accepted standards, how many prohibitions and constraints have been discarded or forgotten, it would be impossible to say. One can measure the change by the positive observation that ten years ago the churches enjoyed beauty only in music. Art and play were known to them only in the decorous performance of the choir.

But now a profusion of expressions of the same spirit, which looks into the mystery of sin and righteousness, give a measure of the transformation in the American spirit. It is not a measure of our national wealth, for these recreations are extending as much among the poor as the rich. It is probably the expression of a philosophy of the life of cities, for the extension of the system of play is slower in the country than in the city. But the chief means for the discipline of men in right behavior is the community house.

In all this progress of recent years, we have given ourselves little explanation and much performance. We have done what the situation required and postponed the moralizing of it. The Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations have been professed servants of the churches in pioneering this field. The Boy Scouts have developed in the United States, and the use of their methods goes far beyond the bounds of

their reported organization. Probably for every troop of Boy Scouts that reports to headquarters, there are two or three groups which use the methods of the Scouts but serve the purpose of some church or high school. These societies have developed the doctrine as well as the practice of play. The quest is of beauty in conduct, as well as in person. They seek good behavior in the face of temptation and vice, in the mysterious acts of life. They desire to excel in body and spirit and to enjoy happiness. In default of explanation by themselves, the present writer believes that the object in all this work is the same. It is an expression of the Puritan spirit which, recognizing the mysterious character of sin and righteousness, seeks to establish a discipline for the conduct of the young in the unpredictable events of life. These are the means of preparing young men and women for achievement and success.

The purpose of this book is not to provide detailed programs, which are offered in profusion by agencies that attend to no other matter.[3] The World War popularized the practices of recreation, and the societies that served in maintaining the morale of the soldiers under their awful trial are ready to-day to instruct those who inquire as to technique. Community Service, Inc., the Knights of Columbus, and the organizations already named are the best advisers as to the way of developing a community program of play. The public schools are

[3] "The Church and the People's Play," Henry A. Atkinson. Pilgrim Press. 1916. "Education through Play" (1916) and "Play and Recreation in the Open Country" (1914), H. S. Curtis. Macmillan.

away beyond the churches in their practice of the philosophy of play. Many high schools have costly equipment for play. The colleges and universities confer upon their students a distinguished preference over other young persons, in the elaborate provision for their leisure. Costly facilities for physical exercise, games, and organized sports, are put at the disposal of the humblest student in these schools. My purpose here is to interpret this field to country people and to the ministers and officers of their churches, for the boy and the girl in the country are as yet unfurnished with adequate means of recreation. Their opportunities for experience that will protect them against temptations are not equal to those of the boy and the girl in the factory town, city, or college community.

Chief among the reasons which commend themselves to the austerely religious man who approves of play and its costly furnishings is that play is self-expression. It is the free movement of the spirit. Work is required of us; however willingly we labor our work is a routine. Its exactions are irksome. But play is the outspeaking of self. It is the free movement of personality. Therefore play is moral: it is at the same time artistic. The Protestant churches which seek the soul and desire to conserve the personality have a logical right, therefore, to cherish the soul in its expressions and to free it from routine so far as in an orderly way it may be made free. This is done best on the playground and at the meeting-place.

The other great reason for the games and the expressions of the playground is the necessity of adequate rural

organization. The wilderness which we conquered in the last century made us a solitary, reserved, and independent people. We find it hard to merge our action with that of others. Under compulsion in big business men have blended their work and subordinated themselves. But the unwilling act is inferior in its teaching value to the voluntary movement on the playground, in the dramatic hall, or in the social meeting. There we can express ourselves in joyous coöperation with those who follow the same way of life. Young men and women who have taken part in athletic games are able to behave during all their after lives in greater ease with others. They know how to make compromises without moral surrender; they know how to sacrifice themselves without humiliation. This knowledge is of increasing value as the nation becomes compactly organized and as our greater population must adjust itself—in business, in education—to new ends and bear in common new burdens. The experience of play acquaints us with one another in acts of obedience, subordination, mutual surrender, and the alternative experience of leadership and following. We find our place with our own group and are afterward ready to adjust ourselves without loss of character to any group.

There is a value in public games that religious workers should recognize. Young men and women see one another in the contests without prudery or shame. They become accustomed to a regulated liberty which dissolves much of the unclean and erases the unseemly from life. Miss Jane Addams has said, "The games are the best

answer to vice, and play consumes the lust of vice." Since the churches live as stewards of the unknown, they have come reverently but without real hesitation to a very large use of play just as in an earlier day they used music for the discipline of the spirit in the way unknown to young feet.

CHAPTER X

"GOOD ENOUGH"

THE poverty of the farmers' churches in the greater agricultural areas is in sharp contrast to the affluence of the churches attended by business people, by students and the dwellers in college towns, and by the inhabitants of cities. Often the lack of a small sum of not more than ten dollars in the treasury of the congregation forbids for many months the completion of a useful improvement. The church is straitened to pay its preacher—is in debt to him, as a matter of fact—and in the face of poverty cannot build a decent fence, or cut the weeds on the church property.

It was not so in the days of the household farmer's church. Indeed, there are a few farmers' churches—many in limited sections—that are able to maintain the church property in beautiful order, to support a janitor or sexton on full time, and, as years pass, to enlarge or rebuild the church edifice. Would that these churches were more numerous: and that the standards of our grandfathers, who had for their day abundance to give, prevailed to-day! The usual farmer's church of the middle West, Northwest, and Southwest was erected as an expedient. It was suitable to the needs of homesteaders. It is already out of date. It is often out of

place, that is, located at no present center of community life. It is shabby. Never was well kept. Has nothing to engage the attentions of the next generation.

Poverty came upon the farmer after the Civil War, in no absolute form,—he had food and shelter,—but in the rising tide of wants which the towns and cities like flood-gates let in upon the land, in which he could not swim or row. He suffered from comparative poverty. He had everything but cash, and cash was of all things most desired, for the purchase of store goods at protected prices. So his church had to go without being rebuilt or even enlarged, when all city churches put on modern architectural garments. Now this shabby old age is idealized and the proposal to rebuild country churches sometimes awakens the indignation of members.

How often one sees in a farmer's church second-hand pews, discarded by a city church, a pulpit alien to the place and obviously handed down, hymn-books with the name of another congregation upon them, and an organ that has done duty elsewhere! And the people boast of it. They pride themselves upon their success as receivers of old ecclesiastical clothes. Somebody's old piano, a heater of honored connections, chairs with a distinguished past are achievements in their eyes. Yet, on reflection, one must admit that their mendicancy is no more than the idealization of their necessity. Farmers have been poor.

The church is built out of surplus. Its gifts are evidence of abundance. It fares ill among people who have neither surplus nor abundance. Even when a community long impoverished attains prosperity, its mem-

bers have for a generation the mind of paupers. They hide their wealth, invest it in land, live poorly, and pass their days in terror of loss.

The automobile has been an object-lesson in expensive living. Of all farmers' properties, it is the form of consumers' goods most perishable. It depreciates more rapidly than horses or carriages, or than farm wagons. Said a mountaineer, "A man can soon 'fifty cents' himself to death with a Ford." Its first cost seems enormously high, and the upkeep is disquieting; but it has commended itself to farmers everywhere as a necessary vehicle. The habit of motoring has accustomed the farmer to free spending. It has introduced him to daily experience of the profit made possible by consumption, for he is now nearer his market. He can economize in use of time. His wits are sharpened upon his neighbors' faces more often. On the whole, a generation inclined at the beginning to the fear of poverty and the joy of economy have learned to pay and to spend. In a few places they have learned to give. Most farmers have that lesson yet to learn.

It should not be a matter of surprise that farmers and villagers put up with shifty expedients and tolerate arrangements that will barely do. The tiller of the soil is creating something out of nothing. He is not always an artist. He is struggling with forces which frequently are too strong for him. He must be content if he attains a success bare of ornament and devoid of beauty. If he is a lumberman his task is to hew down the forest and get from the ruin of nature's noble work a salable product in logs or ties or telephone poles. When that

is done he stops, leaving the lands once ennobled with the growth of centuries a rotting desolation. If he is plowing the land he must be content with the cultivation that will produce a crop, but has not the time to fight the weeds and to cut the fence corners. Whatever pays, he will do. He cannot hire help for increasing the beauty of the landscape or to destroy unsightly things. He cannot even afford the time to fight the pests that threaten his crops of next year.

This pragmatical spirit goes through all the farm economy. Its rule is more rigid now that farming is commercialized and every day's work must be reckoned in profit or loss, than it was in the old days when farmers subsisted on their own products without selling in the public markets. Then the farm-house had surplus labor and the farmer of good taste and fine feeling could send his men to burn brush, cut weeds, and build stone fences. Now that farmers are attentive to the questions of labor income, a hard, prosaic economy controls the country-side and forbids any excellence except that which will pay.

The American farmer is straining himself, moreover, upon the task of possessing much land. The increasing price of land tempts him to keep more under tillage than he has the hands to cultivate. His mind is attentive to speculative profit or set upon the establishment of a large estate. He is forever thinking of a future profit and never solicitous of present beauty or excellence. He fertilizes the soil unwillingly and too often is reluctant to undertake those processes that increase the economic value of the soil. Naturally, he contents him-

self with expedients that are "good enough" for the present.

This deferred excellence of country life has become an ideal, accepted in pioneer days and in the period of speculation, which has not yet ended. In the middle West it is regarded as a necessity of life. Men wear this state of mind as they wear overalls day after day, or old clothing; and, like all necessities when they are accepted, it has become an ideal state. Men think well of this homely living. They think slightingly of the excellence of appearance. They despise beauty and they are indignant at a demand for expenditure upon more costly things.

The Protestant churches are so responsive to popular feeling that they too idealize the straitened and parsimonious way. Schools have official advocates of improvement. The tightening lines of educational organization and the whip of standardization quicken the pace of the common schools in the country. But the farmer is always reluctant to improve his schools, even in the matter of their appearance. Church people content with things "good enough" are sometimes a drag on the improvement of the schools. The result is that in their public equipment country communities are dull and unattractive. The people in them, used to ugly things, expect nothing better and cannot be aroused to undertake fitting improvements.

Unfortunately the influence of the city has offered no help. City people look upon the farmer's parsimony as a matter of course. They think nothing will do for themselves that has not a tribute to beauty and a touch

of luxury, but they take it for granted that people in villages and on the farms will have neither beauty nor luxury. Life in the country is expected to be tasteless, colorless, and rough-formed. So that the influences in the nation that make for improvement of human life are effective in the city but ineffective in the country.

I think it is fair to say that even between farm places and village streets there is a further contrast. One begins to see as he travels through the middle West and the South many attractive farm places. The farm women are beautifying their domains and demanding fresh paint, close-cut lawns, and massed shrubbery. Within the house they are securing, besides the telephone and running water which the men might be expected to install, modern furniture and indoor plumbing. The automobile, the pioneer project in the expenditure of money, has taught many lessons and brought home many ideas. The place where the farmer lives has taken on some of the gloss of the bright, shining surface of the family car. But the small village through which the train passes is still too often a sordid place. The excellent things have come more slowly to the village than to the farm.[1] In certain sections of the country, especially in the South, the small town is hideous. The landscape shows many pretty and well-planned farm-houses smiling brightly in the midst of well-kept fields. And then appears a shapeless, disorderly village, with store fronts unpainted, streets unpaved, dirt and disorder ruling the common life.

[1] "Town Planning for Small Communities," Charles S. Bird. Appleton. "Rural Improvement," Frank A. Waugh. Judd.

So long as religion is an expression of the spirit of God in the people themselves, just so long will it register their sense of the worth of life. We must wait until the American religion sets a higher value upon the life of every man, for those expressions of an excellent way to appear in the road on which the poor must walk, and in the furnishings of the church to which the sinner is invited. Not until that time comes will the music of country churches, for instance, be better than the thoughts of the people. So long as country people are content with things that barely serve, we shall have the hymn-books lying upon the seats of the country church and bestrewing the floor, scarcely worth the picking up and unclean to the cultured imagination. They are "good enough" for a people who for two hundred years have been wandering away from the land of English ballads and the home of German harmonies.

The remedy for this parsimony of life will, I suppose, come as good roads have come. Nothing more forbidding was known in our American life twenty years ago than the unimproved country road that passed the farm-house. Men and women of faith harangued in the nineties in vain, demanding the improvement of the country road. Who has forgotten the exhortations that centered about the King split-log drag? This simple and effective device for smoothing the country road was held before the farmers of the middle West, and the instances in which it was used were extensively advertised by public speakers before the days of the automobile; but so far as producing many imitations of Mr.

King and his drag is concerned, the roads were generally unimproved; until a new incentive and a new administration entered. The automobile provided the incentive and the state with the reënforcement of national subsidies found the administration.

Now there runs into nearly every county in the land a perfect, modern road; and as a result the old, ungraded farmers' roads are no longer "good enough." The dirt roads are now graded and crowned by the zealous hands of farmers who know what a good road is. An example of the good roads built by the State has penetrated into the knowledge of every farm-house, and the imitation of them has seized upon the imagination of competent men in every local government. Is there anything more beautiful in the country to-day than the state road? It glides through the sordid villages like a curve of beauty. It lies upon the face of hill and valley as a symbol of distances and purpose, a token of the nation's conception of itself. It is like a caress laid lovingly upon the face of nature, recognizing the aspects of the land but claiming all parts for order and excellent living.

Is not the remedy for the prosaic and the second-hand, for the parsimonious spirit of the farmer, to be found in a national spirit? Even the churches, which idealize local experience, will yield in time to the limitation of new patterns of beautiful and comfortable houses erected for the worship of God, to which people come from their less distinguished homes. In time the church itself, we may hope, will excel as the school already excels in many communities. Standing out over

the level of the houses in the flat and prosaic wards of great cities, one sees uplifted the dimensions of the school building, conforming to a new American architecture and shaped after the best models known to the State office of education. Is it too much to expect that the Protestant church of the future will be erected in obedience to an external beauty and modeled upon lines that represent something of the conception that the American people have of themselves?

So long as the church is "good enough" for mere survival, it will not preserve the religion of Jesus Christ. Parsimony cannot be the rule of Christian growth, but rather sacrifice and aspiration. Too many ministers and church officers, intent upon extending their work to the utmost limit of breathless zeal, have consented to worship in houses upon which they bestow only enough attention to keep them from falling down. We have passed the time when this is necessary. If we continue to house our faith in buildings furnished with second-hand pews, used-over pulpits, and worn-out carpets, we shall deny the very faith itself. There is no need now of zeal concentrated upon reaching every community, because most of the communities in the land have churches enough and to spare. The time has come to express Christianity in beauty and rich gifts. There is no need now for farmers to strain themselves for the possession of more land; the duty that confronts the modern farmer is to make his land excel in production and to enrich it for his son and grandson after him. He should obey a social spirit that recognizes the land as a national possession held for the time in trust. The

spirit of Christ is expressed in His parables, in the perfection of His seamless robe, the charm of His conduct. Christianity cannot live forever in second-hand clothes. It must express itself in high living and perfected externals of life.

I am convinced that the low esteem in which the individual is held in the United States, in the prevailing standards of mediocrity, is a violation of the Christian spirit and a restraint upon the gospel which Jesus Christ gave to the world. As a nation we idealize the inferior man. We have been poor. We think with complacency of the meager life of poor people. If we have a competence, we still are content with inadequate and starveling materials of the spirit. We repress, we rebuke, we scorn the man or woman who insists upon something better. We cry out against the person who desires more excellence in books or architecture, or in the treatment of children, or in the order of divine worship. The reason is that we make an umpire of the low-grade man. Perhaps this is the way democracy must needs work out its destiny. But if inferiority and parsimony are the destiny of democracy, then there is in the Christian gospel another revolution to come, for the essence of the teaching of Christ is obedience to the high and the fine, and the imitation of the sacrificial spirit which is possessed only by the few. The Christian religion involves an aspiration after the best, which the life of small communities to-day represses and denies.

CHAPTER XI

RURAL SPIRITUALITY

FOR a number of years the writer of this book was concerned with the weakness and disorder of the country church, and with the lack of institutions that a church needs to reinforce it. But for the past five years he has felt a deeper discouragement because of the low spiritual tone of country life. Relatively speaking, the people in small American communities have not shared in the growth of the country. The United States progressed far in this century in cultural privileges made possible by the advance of science, the enjoyment of bodily health and comfort, the growth of the arts of communication and transportation, and intercourse with the people of Europe and Asia. Influential sections of the population have become tolerant, modest, critical-minded, objective in thinking, and humane. Many Americans entertain a hope that sources of suffering and injustice may be removed and human life freed from particular afflictions, the causes of which are within human control. Americans in small communities have not generally had a part in this spiritual development, and those dwellers in small towns who have experienced the change of standard are unable to express themselves locally as their spiritual kindred

in cities do, because the small town will not have a superior spokesman. The farm population has therefore suffered a corresponding loss in that it has not kept its mind open to the growing spirituality of the time.

The farm population shows even spiritual decline, by reason of the expulsion from the rural community of so many exceptional minds. The very persons and families whose genius would have brought God near have been constrained to go elsewhere,—to the West, to Canada, to the city,—and without them there is distorted vision, loss of faith, and no humanity. The evidences of this spiritual decline press upon every one who spends a week or a month in a country place, which one or two generations ago was known for its worship on Sunday and hopefulness and industry on week-days. Instead of dignified neighborly ways the people show antagonism in religion, accompanied by cruelty to human beings; instead of following leaders regarded with respect, rural society suppresses individual variation and minimizes exceptional excellence. Weaklings are made the arbiters of morality, and, contrary to the spirit of our civilization which exalts persons to great power, rustic opinion and conversation revolve around the doings of the subnormal.

Religion in the country is supported by testimony of times and places where individuals "got religion." It has no faith, only verified knowledge. The activities of country churches have lost the road of the spirit and go after lawmaking, law-enforcement, and finance, and sometimes after voluble discussion of science or scholarship. Many ministers having no genuine spirituality

are using the church—if they have not sunk into indifference—as a vestibule to a career in teaching, or as a stair to personal ambition. Above all, the coöperative spirit is lacking which the obedience to God should supply, and which the life of the tiller of the soil in this day of organization requires. The cruel antagonisms of country people center in their churches, which in the communities most numerously supplied with denominations do little besides opposing one another. They create a spirit of latent bitterness, which, unsoftened by any love of mercy, breaks out against those of another creed, or race, or country. Their services are conducted by men untrained in literature, or in variety of human contacts.

Is it any wonder that the United States is a land of homicides, or that in crimes of violence we Americans exceed all other great peoples? These crimes are most numerous not in the greatest cities but in those bigger towns in which country-born persons meet in business and social competition the men of other races and other States. To one who knows the American countryman of the pure American stock and has plumbed his tide of antagonism to its rocky bottom, or has heard his sectarian preacher in a dull, bleak meeting-house denounce those who live in the same town as traitors deserving prison, and heretics on the way to hell, it does not seem strange that we are cruel people. That we find it difficult to coöperate in agricultural business is, in fact, a result of this spirit of antagonism. But it is made worse by the presence in rural communities of negroes,

Japanese, and persons from other States, because of the habit, into which many Americans have fallen, of hating sections of the human race.

American spirituality is lowered, also, by the domination of religious and moral life by the weaklings. We do indeed receive "him that is weak," but in defiance of Saint Paul's warning we receive him [1] "for the decision of scruples." He too often has a place in the country church as deacon or steward of the congregation. The system of spirituality we employ was framed in a time of military prowess; but we have denounced its proper leaders, while retaining their system. We have put the corselet of Cromwell too often upon the flat chest of a money-lender or a reformed gambler. We love in these days a man who "can lead in prayer," but our church theory is democratic and should be entrusted only to men who can also lead in action. So we have idealized the weaklings in the elders' bench and in the pulpit.

We have done the same thing in morality. Our argument for abolishing the bottle from the dining-room, and the gambling game from the parlor has been that the weak brother should not be exposed to temptation. Small towns are dominated by that weak brother. The object of the apostle's wary tolerance has become the arbiter of our conscience and the leader of our devotions. He can indeed pray. He has exceptional need to do so. But he cannot lead. He can only lower the tone of obedience to God by his own inability either to obey or to command. City churches cannot

[1] Romans, XIV, 1. (Revised Version, margin.)

survive without the leadership of superior minds. But country churches cannot escape the domination of the subnormal.

If the writer of these complaints seems to be a severe critic, he at least speaks from experience and out of many disappointments. Sitting in church on many a Sabbath morning, he has heard and seen there everything but religion. He who came to worship has been given politics, law-enforcement, spurious science, sensuous music, and church finance. It has seemed on many Sundays that the country church had missed the road to heaven, and was following the politician to the State capitol, the policeman to the jail, the teacher to the high-school laboratory, and the banker to his safe. None of these bring the weary mind to trust in God. Too often the minister of a village or town church, having no deep, abiding spirituality, uses the church as a means of livelihood until he can "get something better." Sometimes he is in despair and tries to hide it behind tricks and words or loud volubilities about the departed saloon or safe assaults upon the vices of distant cities.

What is spirituality? It is the quality one observes in the conduct of those who obey God, rather than those who seek personal gain or are governed by things. It has specific forms, as love of truth, of beauty, of justice; such as mercy, humility; and opposite, such as greed, falsehood, cowardice, irreverence. For nineteen centuries it has been best described as likeness to Jesus of Nazareth. In country places spirituality betokens a power such as Robert Frost has, and Wordsworth had, of interpreting the unseen Creator by means of his work.

So our Lord understood His Father through the beauty of the lily and the security of the sparrow. Who has heard in a country church in the United States a sermon on farming as imitation of the Creator? Where do country pastors interpret biology as the science of creative life, or evolution as the name for a body of knowledge useful to breeders of cattle? Instead, the farmer's church resounds with arguments about the meaning of words translated from a tongue no longer spoken, and with denunciation of those who differ from the preacher. And that sort of preacher is a man well meaning enough, but too often one of mediocre attainments, whose advice no farmer would ask on any question of importance.

There is generally in the rural community a close relation between the spirit of the church and the disposition of the community. It is not direct. The influence of the church upon political and civic life is not always evident, though the disposition of Protestant ministers to take active part in political matters is at present very pronounced. The real correlation is too subtle to be analyzed. But in communities in which a devout minister resides with his family, who knows how to minister to his people's spiritual cravings and to do his duty as a citizen, there are usually a clean political life, sound economic processes, and a comfortable social equipment. On the other hand, the churches in some rural communities seem to be arrested in their Christian growth. Nothing good for the community comes of their zeal beyond the enrolment of confessing members, the organization of Bible classes and women's missionary

societies, and the support of a series of short-term pastors.

What, then, promotes spirituality among farmers? There are several secondary factors, each of which is essential, and all are effective in producing reverence and obedience of the spirit. Beauty of color and line, sweet sounds, even good food and pleasant odors, contribute. But the primary factor—which seldom acts alone—is found in the life and conduct of persons who are evidently God-compelled. One or more persons devoted to God, whether preacher or layman, man or woman, must reside in any community and have access to its common public life, if there is to be any high regard for truth, justice, or peace among men. Spirituality seems to be composed of obedient imitations of those who obey God, and the inspiring leaders must be present in the community long enough for their integrity and sincerity to be disclosed not to reason alone but to instinctive imitation in the formation of habits and the subsequent projection of ideals. Preaching is not enough, nor the occasional visit of a great and good man. There must be living contact with living men in seasons of sorrow and deep joy, which are infrequent; until faith has been rooted in the lives of the youth, and until these have grown to maturity, able to pass on the contagion to others in their days of sorrow or of joy.

This question of rural spirituality is of all the questions that center in the farmer's church the most important. It concerns the whole community, and as the farm is the nation's greatest industry, it is big with national import. The solution of it is simple. Problems

of organization do not approach it nearer than the threshold. Programs of activity of the church are subsequent to its solution. They are like the farming of a losing crop: unless the church is religious, it is a loss to all concerned. And we are all concerned in the success of the farmer's church. The solution of the problem of rural spirituality lies in sending to country communities resident pastors with their families—men and women who believe in God, and have the gift of imparting a constructive faith, through a period of years, to the youth; and to those whose hearts are opened by joy, or sorrow, or fear, the mystery and the comfort of God. There are other sources of rural spirituality, but they are not subject to our control. Secondary causes which we control are also worthy of discussion in this book. But in all solutions there is present the God-obedient man who as a resident shepherd of souls has given his life to the community for, as a rule, about seven years.

The spirituality of a farmer would seem to consist in regarding his life and work as a trust. For the materials used by a farmer are necessities of life. He has a monopoly of the land he tills, if he is an owner. He produces the food and the raw materials of clothing. All men are dependent upon him. His spiritual response should take the form of a sense of obligation to produce abundance, and to produce goods of the best quality.

There are farmers who produce for the joy of creation —not forgetful, indeed, of the profit they hope to receive. Some of them are men of sufficient means to

free themselves, if they so desire, from the care of the farm, but they labor for the creation of goods because the creative materials are theirs. Rich soil, meadows for cattle to graze in, fertilizers, and the magic of legumes with which wonders can be wrought that were not known to their fathers—all these move them with a deep fascination. The Master praised husbandmen who managed well, as if He understood their feelings.

Farmers used to strive for quantity production alone. in the past century agriculture has attained proficiency in the production of finer strains of cattle and superior grades of grain and cotton. The pride of the farmer in producing these is often alloyed with a desire for profit, because of the high prices paid and the exceptional gains in the commercial process attending these productive victories. But the joy of creation is there; indeed, that joy of quality production is measured economically by higher prices. For other producers show that they share the admiration for high creation.

As we have seen, the revival of Denmark in the past sixty years has been a dual movement, religious and industrial. While the Danes were building creameries they were rebuilding their churches. Who shall say that they are not a spiritual people, who have been the first European nation to consider total disarmament?

There should be in the United States a religious revival in which the classes of the population now dissatisfied with the churches we have, shall lead. They are the laborers, the farmers, and the intellectuals. Among the last-named class are the scientific workers. They

are closely related; for the scientific workers are the brains of power-machinery and of specialized agriculture. They all proceed by methods of objective thinking, by measurement and record of phenomena, by organized discussion and utilitarian use of the bodies of knowledge. There will some day arise among us a prophet who shall know how to tell new truths about God, truths learned by those who study phenomena. Our religious experience has been stated for us by prophets trained in the humanities. Such were Paul and Augustine and Luther and Wesley. When a man of imagination arises, who has been trained in use of the microscope and the statistical graph, whose soul cries out for God, we shall have a new spirituality of the farm. It may be that the revival of the farmer's church awaits the coming of that prophet.

American religion is also indebted to science, because science protects us against superstition. The unknown realities affect us whether we consider them or not; and we respond to them emotionally. The commonest response to the realities of the world unknown to our senses is superstition, which may be defined as unreasonable human behavior about death, marriage, husbandry, sin, and other mysterious experiences. Men of all races have their tabus, fetishes, charms, and incantations, of which they can give no rational explanation. Their lives are ruled for the larger part by these irrational responses to obligation that custom has sanctified and fears enforce. Let no one think our own land, because its people are profusely educated, is free of

superstitions. A recent book[2] details at length the irrational practices which Americans are given to; and every one knows the list is a long one. It is not the province of education alone to abate superstition, but, in a more intimate way, that of religion. There is not sufficient intelligence for the task, because critical intelligence is given to few minds to exercise.

Religion is a medium for the application of intelligence to emotion, and for the organized restraint of fears, by reason. There are, indeed, religions that are compacted superstitions, to which no critical intelligence has ever been applied for the discernment and denunciation of misbeliefs. But the Jewish-Christian religion has been a progressive application of the critical mind through more than two thousand years to the irrational practices of religious people. Probably if there were no Christianity, and certainly if there were no Protestant churches, there would be more religious exercises: more sighing and groaning, more shouting and more kneeling would be ours if it were not for Isaiah, and Augustine, and Luther, and Wesley. For these churches of ours, by their creeds and their ordering of life, reduce religion to staid demeanor and give a liturgy to those whom fears would otherwise make frantic.

The fact that Americans and Western Europeans are calm in the presence of death and unresentful in the face of transgression, is a consequence of the restraint put upon emotion by reason. For the unknown awakens the passions.

[2] "American Folk Lore," C. E. Brown. University of Wisconsin Press. 1922.

American religious history[3] exhibits the arousal of religious feeling. The early settlers and the remote country-dwellers of our day exhibit the turning of lonely men and women to God, when they have no preacher to guide them, with sighing and groaning like the agonies of the heathen. Wherever there is no responsible church, there is likely to be one invented; and for the time this lasts it is more religious, so far as emotional exercises go, than the conventional churches. It seems as if the springs of religion are in the earth. Smitten with the rod of man's lonely husbandry, they pour forth. Christianity is the engineering science which controls the plan of religion in the world and directs it into useful channels.

[3] "The Great Revival in the West," Catherine C. Cleveland. University of Chicago Press. 1916.

CHAPTER XII

THE DIFFERENCE

THERE is something thrilling about a community in which the Christian religion is in evidence. There is a feeling of disgust and contempt among people who see the forms of religion but not a Christian spirit. The difference between communities that have spirituality and those which have religion without it, is not easy to define; but it registers in positive satisfaction or revolt. I dare say that this difference is sufficient to account in many instances for the departure of persons from a country community, or the enjoyment of a community by those who remain there. Yet it is not easy to decide what is the determining factor. One is tempted to fix upon a physical difference and assign it as the cause of the joy of living known in one place, and the distaste for the community expressed in the other.

Church people are likely to give, as a cause of religious happiness, the number of members their church has, the faithfulness of a minister through a long pastorate, or the beauty of their Gothic architecture and church service. I set these causes in a high place, but they do not belong in my present concern; they are, at the best, only means to an end. The difference between a com-

munity that enjoys religion and one that does not, is discovered in a state of feeling and of character. Physical arrangements, such as the locating of a resident pastor for a long period of years, have much to do with the permanence of these feelings and with other advantages, of one place over another, but sometimes these very arrangements are found where the spirit and the will are absent.

I do not think, either, that the difference we feel in country communities is a declared willingness, on the part of some people, to obey Jesus Christ and, on the part of others, inattention to the imitation of Christ. It is not essentially a mystical experience, for few among men are mystics. This difference in country communities is shared by every one. It lays hold of their common speech, it commands the grateful assent of the poor and the profane, it brings a softer expression to the faces of arrogant, worldly people, and it enters by the unguarded door of social imitation into the conduct of every one in the community.

So far as I can discover, this difference between communities is not dependent upon what we Americans call a revival. During times of protracted meetings there is a feeling of spiritual alarm and subsequent spiritual peace, which many share; those who look on admire and approve the change from a sense of sin to a sense of security, on the part of the persons converted; but the revival does not give directly a sense of worth and of faith to the community and all its people. Many revivals are carried on at such high tension that they are succeeded by disgust and disillusionment; the let-down

that follows is so cruel that the excitement is remembered with shame, and religion has thereafter to overcome a reluctance. Not so the community that has experienced the difference between a religion of joy and no religion at all.

I know a town in an Eastern State that has passed from one condition to the other; for fifty years it has been losing its population to the near-by manufacturing cities; its own people follow the industry of farming alone; it has a limited number of families with the tradition of scholarship, reading, and high moral conviction. The whole population possesses a tradition of personal independence, and almost every one is an owner of land. For twenty years the one church in the town—two others having closed their doors at the beginning of the population decrease—had a succession of pastors, either indifferent to the community or negligent of the high value of Christianity; that is, they made no impression upon the town in respect to sincerity, self-restraint, or love of their neighbors. They lived to themselves: their selfishness was sometimes gross and always sterile of any good to their people. Some of these men were preachers of superior ability, but that made no difference.

Then came a young pastor who seemed like the others, except in a sturdy candor and devotion to the work of his church, the care of his family, and the simple prosaic relations of life into which his lot had fallen. He had to work with his hands to supplement his small salary, and he did everything with a satisfactory heartiness which left an impression quite impossible to

describe, but always favorable. For five years he held his ground, but professed no program. He was in favor in the community, as was his wife also; full of health and energy, giving happiness and receiving it, making no great professions, attacking no evils except when they came across his path, and then never avoiding them; living as a good human being, and dignifying the ministry of Christ with something of manly integrity that always fitted the popular conception of a Christian. At the end of seven years he was a better preacher; he had, little by little, pervaded the whole town without ever planning to do so. He not only was acquainted with every one, but had attracted the full knowledge and friendship of those about him by the very fact that he had worked with his hands in the fields of many of them, and had sat in their gatherings always as an equal.

Meantime, some changes in the community itself contributed to the rebirth of this dead town. A crop of high-school children grew up, and a daily bus was employed to carry them six miles every day to high school. Public events in the way of play festivals, library days, well-chaperoned dances, and the building of short stretches of new road, gave outlet to a spirit of hope. Two young men who had experience of the larger world came to middle life. One was a resident, a graduate of Yale, the other, a generous, public-spirited business man of means. After the World War the town entered upon two experiences that revealed a new spirit.

Some one proposed that a memorial be set up for soldiers. After some discussion a boulder was selected,

and it was agreed by the group of farmers that gather regularly in the one store of this town, to move this boulder two miles and set it up at the tiny triangle where the roads meet "at the center." Preparation for this event consumed months of that slow discussion by which volunteers approach a common task; but finally the men of the town gathered round the boulder lying in the bed in which the glacier had deposited it millions of years before. Pick and shovel disclosed the fact that it was bigger and more difficult to move than they had expected. But greater difficulties only called forth greater forces, and there ensued one of those strange attacks of the human mind upon inert matter which are so fascinating to see. Every man in town was called out by the struggle. The volunteers jostled one another, crowbar in hand. Leaders were easily found and readily obeyed, for it soon was evident who among them had the gift of command.

After a long effort the boulder was moved a little toward the road, and gradually it was edged along by that skill that countrymen in the older States possess, until it was careened upon an underslung wagon—which it promptly broke down.

New tackle was devised, new gear and new energies offered. The whole town was thrilled over the undertaking. It was more fascinating than a man-hunt. The energies that are hurled in some dull communities into scandal, the violence that occasionally breaks out in an American lynching were concentrated upon that huge reluctant mass of granite. Inch by inch, and foot by foot at first, under the pull of three tractors, the great

stone moved along the road. A bridge over which it was to pass had to be sustained with fresh supports below. A little hill beyond the brook was a new obstacle, and the struggle to mount it seemed hopeless.

But every obstacle was overcome, and after a week of such excitement as the town had not known even in its four war-times, the boulder was deposited in its significant seat, which it fitted as if the crossing of the roads had been planned for its reception. The subsequent public ceremony—when the bronze tablet upon it was unveiled in the presence of the Governor of the State—was only a climax. The great experience had been the united action of the whole town and the public service that demonstrated the worth of the community. Something had happened to disclose to the men in the town that they had power and will. They could do things. It was dear to their thrifty hearts that with an expenditure of less than one hundred dollars they had a finer memorial than a near-by opulent village had secured at the cost of thousands. One man, who had been considering a departure from the town, said, "How could I leave when I saw what this town could do?" The whole experience had seemed to purify the air and sweeten the atmosphere of the place. Life had a value it had never possessed before. The people of the town had united in an experience unselfish and of public benefit. Even those who contributed nothing—as some surly spirits always begrudge their parts—had been present on certain days to have their picture taken by the photographer; so that every one was satisfied.

Not long afterward the same town went through a spiritual crisis. This came suddenly and nothing like it had ever occurred before. It stirred the conscience and the feelings of every one, and required a discussion for which there was no precedent. The storekeeper in the town was an aged man with a rare gift for business, accuracy, fine judgment, and an admirable interest in the community and in every member of it. He had maintained for fifty years an old-fashioned country store of the sort one reads about, where through winter days and on all the nights of the year men congregated to talk and argue. He had recently surrendered to the one politician of the town the office of town treasurer, which he had held for forty-six years. In connection with the transfer of ancient accounts his New England conscience raised a question as to a certain small fund, long since forgotten by every one but himself. His successor encouraged him to believe that he was an unintentional defaulter and he paid over a substantial amount to make good the default. Then his accurate mind and trained sense of justice raised doubts, hesitations, which were too much for his enfeebled powers. He fell into melancholy amounting almost to a harmless insanity.

As soon as these things became known to the town, they created intense excitement. There were some who at once accepted the accusation against the old man and believed that, like many another trusted public servant, he had defaulted. A very few assumed a cynical tone and declared that they would see him leave the town penniless, as he had come fifty years before. But

most of the citizens were reluctant to believe that this trusted and honest man, whose integrity they knew, could be to blame. A meeting of the whole town was held, and after discussion this meeting ordered the return of the money paid over. Promptly the new town treasurer accused his predecessor of further defalcation, and named an amount so large as to astonish every voter and tax-payer. Subsequent town meetings were ordered. A public accountant supported the accusation against the venerable merchant, and it seemed that the tax-payers of the community must rise to demand full payment.

Then a strange thing happened. There were four men in the town who had refused at every turn to believe the accusation true. As the meetings approached at which the question would be settled, they studied the accounts of the town for fifty years back and discovered that the town bonds of fifty years before, on which the default was said to have occurred, had been issued in duplicate; and at once light appeared upon the dark problem. Hurried consultations with the most responsible accountants of the State followed, a complete reversal of the verdict was secured, and when the town meeting assembled the second accusation against the old man was cleared up.

But now remained this question: Should the town return to a well-to-do citizen an amount that had been exacted from him when he seemed to himself to have been in default? The meeting, the largest ever held in the history of the town, was one of tremendous feeling. Every citizen—even persons who seldom attended

any public gathering—was there. No play festival, or church anniversary, not even the setting up of the Soldiers' Memorial before the town hall had been attended by more of the citizens. There was no discussion. Only one question was raised: "Will the town have to be taxed to repay this money? Will the farmers have to raise more money to correct the fault into which a politician has led them?" The answer was in the affirmative. No further question was raised, but a vote was called for and with almost unanimous voice this community of poor farmers voted to return to its most substantial citizen money which their elected officer had exacted from him and paid into the treasury of the State.

After the meeting, scenes of elation and relief took place on every side. No religious revival was ever followed by more genuine expressions of pity and joy, than this revival in which a town had repented of its error. To see men who seldom wear any garb but overalls, their faces lighted with happiness, was a strange experience. One elderly farmer, who had come to the end of a life-long struggle to get a farm of his own, testified with tears to the fact that he too had at one time thought the old man guilty of default: and then he recited how when he was in the beginning of his struggle to pay for his farm, the old storekeeper had advanced him the money to buy a needed pair of mules, and had let him pay the loan at his own convenience without interest.

Next morning the old storekeeper, who had not left his house for weeks, was seen again in the store for a few hours, whistling as he worked over his books. Men

who passed along the road spread the news that he had recovered his mind, and happiness ruled for a short time. Alas for the weakness of old age! The cloud soon descended upon his mind, and in a few days he died. But the spirit that had restored him to his place of esteem remained. The whole town had gone through an experience of pity, mercy, and justice, and had narrowly escaped a shameful scandal, being saved by the resolute faith of a few. I am confident that this could not have happened if the town had not been prepared by a few honest, sincere men and women, who in the years immediately preceding these events had attended to public concerns and had thought about the common welfare.

Contrast this situation with the religious and moral condition in so many country towns and villages throughout the United States. They often have not only one church but several. Ministers reside in them and preach regularly. Their religious organization is satisfactory to the denominations which we know in America. They have revivals. They receive members. They raise funds. They maintain Sunday-schools. The usual religious machinery is in motion. In some of these towns the membership in the churches is of the average of the country. But the difference between them and the place in which life is worth while is immeasurable. I cannot give details that will describe it. But the citizens of these towns speak and think with disgust and distaste of the places in which they live.

For instance, I was told recently, by a distinguished

scholar, of his native village in the central West, to which he returns at times as a visitor. The population is about twenty-five hundred. The country around adds as many more to the natural community. There are in the village five churches, one of which has a membership of more than a thousand. Seventy-five per cent. of the people of the community are enumerated in church membership, but a spirit of contention is everywhere. Competition and mutual criticism are regularly employed in religious work. Small scandals are welcomed and not suppressed at the source, as they should be. And although the community is made up of American stock, with no negroes or foreigners to disturb its serenity, there is present in it an organized hatred of the foreigner. The minister of the biggest church in the community is a distinguished orator, who uses his gifts to deliver in the village and in near-by towns brilliant addresses denouncing Roman Catholics and cultivating a hatred for the Jews. Neither Catholics nor Jews disturb the population to which he speaks, but he gives the narrow spirits of his audiences an object on which to expend their malice. He cultivates a religion of hatred.

The result is that this village is distasteful to its own people. The life there has no worth for those who must live it. A general pessimism prevails. Men desire to move away as soon as they can. A kind of sneering disbelief in any good thing of a local sort is the usual undertone of talk. It seemed to my informant that religion had departed from this place at the very time at which the usual provision for religion was completed.

Churches are there, but no spirituality. Worship and Evangelism, Sunday-school teaching and the work of church societies are all actively pursued. But the result attains in the community none of the ends of the Christian religion. There are none of the satisfactions of Christian experience such as all in the community can enjoy.

This difference between communities seems to show that something is needed in this country beyond that which the denominations provide. There is in this fact no discredit to the denominations, for their provision is of a machinery proper to religious life: we cannot get on without it. But a new spirit is needed. New consecrations and new gifts are required if we are to have a religion in the United States that will make life in small communities worth while. The little towns and the open country do not have the external rewards of life. They can and must test, by sincerity, the worth of what they have, much more than the big cities do. The life in the cities, which is for many a superficial life, is enriched by the presence of many excitements and the possibility of consuming a variety of goods to the end of enjoyment. City people have the money and they spend it; they have works of art; they have music, dramatic entertainment, brilliant lights, and considerable excitement.

It is quite possible for a man to live in a city and forget that life is without real satisfaction. It is impossible in a small town. There must be true Christianity in a little place where moving pictures are not changed more than once a week, and a good theater is

never opened, where the buildings are commonplace and the architecture is prosaic and tawdry; where to attain neatness and order means a struggle. Men cannot say that life is worth while there unless there is a spiritual worth in life itself. The small towns and the open country, therefore, are the real proving ground of religion.

The question still remains with which I began: What is the cause and what are the sources of this spiritual condition? I do not know the whole answer, for I believe that the sources are many. Anything that gives worth to life, will help—architectural distinction, beauty of scene, color, graceful lines. Music confers worth on life because it expresses wonder and mystery in harmonious terms. Old families confer worth on life because they are significant at least of stability through many years and many changes. Learning confers worth because it provides a wide-reaching assurance of knowledge that is not of the moment. Education provides worth because it engages a limited number of persons in far-reaching thoughts and secures them in habits of mind and soul that are shared by a caste of learned men throughout the world. It gives them access to sources of imperishable knowledge. It even corrects their speech and demeanor.

But the real source of spirituality must be in personal character. There must be in a community that has a conviction of its own worth, some persons who are sincere and fearless, who sacrifice for unseen realities. It is not enough to have just one person, even if he be the pastor and the prophet. He must have a group of minds

and souls with which he can interact in continuing experience through months and years of sincerity and of faith. If this condition is met, and if their acts of daring and faith are such as to appeal to the minds of all, the community has worth and joy. If the men of faith are aristocrats, bookish or socially superior, living apart, the condition is not met. In this day of proletarian rule the small group of leaders must send out influences on the same sound waves as the people of the community react to, if there is to be a spirit of justice and faith and joy.

I see only one more essential characteristic of a spiritual-minded community and that is that it be international in its interests—which is a big word for a simple thing. If the community interests partake of those things that engage many men throughout the world and even across the seas, then the community will be tolerant, merciful, and just. It seems to me that the best principle according to which the selection of community interests could be made is that those concerns of a community shall be advanced that are harmonious with the concerns of other races and their countries. Thus the local organization and the local feeling will be broadly human and all men can better share therein.

CHAPTER XIII

MORAL VALUES

THE opinions of country people are austere and stern. Farmers invariably have a code of morality in reference to common events. They constantly discuss right and wrong. Their ethical standards are most intense in their expression through the country church. Without regard to the correctness and permanent value of farmers' moral opinions, it is worth while to consider the causes that make the farmer a moralist.

The first cause is in the experience of isolation which marks all the life of country people. So deep is this strain in our moral complexion that the second generation of people in cities show it in a kind of independence and aloofness which their grandfathers learned while following the plow and their grandmothers when they were throwing the shuttle through the loom in the room off the old farm kitchen.

There are two reasons why men live on the isolated farms of the United States; one is industrial: the other is psychological. The industrial reason is the necessity which keeps the farmer near to his domestic animals and plants. Family farm organization is probably the most efficient agrarian organization in the world. At least it is the latest form and has supplanted the manor in

western Europe, the plantation in the South, and the bonanza farm in the West. So that there is a necessity upon the farmer to live alone. Naturally he idealizes a life of independence. He projects his own way of living as a good way and would impose it upon all society. He compares others with himself. Consequently we have many churches in the United States which make a religious doctrine of independence. Many are Congregational in government which do not call themselves by that name. They idealize the life made necessary by the industry of tilling the soil.

It may be, also, that many live in the country who like to be alone. This is the psychological reason why men live on isolated farms. Farm communities give evidence in their public meetings and common enterprises of the aloofness of mind and independence of action which a large fraction of the residents of the farms prefer to practise. Nearly one half of the people in some communities and more than one fourth of the farmers in most communities belong to nothing except the family. Their innate preference for minding their own business should be studied and understood if one is to appreciate in its real meaning the American country church; for some of these lonely souls get religion and, when they do, they make it like unto themselves. This is their right: and persons who live in cities, where there is congestion, should not idealize the crowded life as the only way of serving God. Whether they prefer to be alone or not, many country people put a high estimate upon independence and would gladly impose it upon others.

The morality of the country is an independent morality. Men are expected to take care of themselves. In business matters one is shocked to see the apparent indifference of one man to his neighbor's economic misfortunes. This hardness of heart has something admirable about it. Under different circumstances the man who appears so selfish would sacrifice the best he has for his neighbor, but he is accustomed to think of himself as economically responsible for his own house and his own kindred; contrariwise, free of the care of his neighbor's estate.

Country people contribute to our national code of ethics the finest practice of neighborly service. For such as they, I suppose, was written that simple and supreme law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Our Lord enlarged it and insisted upon its operation in a mobilized population of travelers and merchants, but probably it was announced at the beginning as a law for a rural people. They alone know how to obey it. Independent and aloof as they are, farmers will do for a neighbor what city men will not do for the man nearest at hand. In the country it matters not who the next-door neighbor is: a fine sense of responsibility makes the farmer loan to him and give to him much of what he has. To a city man who lives for a part of the year in a country community, this ministration on which no price is put has a character almost angelic. He is used to a world where everything has its price, but among his rural neighbors services are free. They help him when his car is in a hole, they nurse him when he is sick, they contribute without ostentation if he is poor,

even to the extent of setting him on his feet again; and they take no credit; for the farmers' code is law and to obey it brings no merit, only the joy of well-doing.

The church in the country was originally a neighborhood society. It was no bigger than the company of farmers who knew one another well. Its minister cost little, and it hired no other services than preaching. Churches of this sort are now out of date, but the code of neighborly service without price is not discarded in this day of scientific farming. The church itself should be, and generally is, a court of ethics in the enforcement of neighborly conduct. Not a few country churches have been careful to preserve the habit of organizing the community for the help of a stricken neighbor. They keep as many services as possible in a voluntary class and train their members in doing things together for the common interest.

In all this one finds no explanation, however, of the moral dominance which farmers claim. Two organized expressions of moral control have grown up in rural America that require to be explained by something besides the neighborly spirit. Prohibition was originally a farmer's law. The Ku Klux Klan has developed its greatest force in agricultural sections of the country. Both of these profess to lay a rule upon other persons. Prohibition is the legal control imposed by total abstainers upon others in the community who may desire to purchase and use alcoholic liquor. The members of the hooded order very generally profess to regulate the morals of the community, by threats and if necessary by violence. How can we explain these two

expressions of the rural mind? How can we understand the close relation of both of them to the country church? For in both of these movements ministers and congregations of farmers have taken an active part, of which they are far from ashamed.

It seems to me that the interest of country people in private conduct is rooted in something deeper than the Puritan tradition. It is commonly explained as an expression of Puritanism, but other rural peoples[1] which are not Puritanical have the same inclination to domineer over the conduct of individuals. In the United States the pressure of public opinion upon the conduct of the individual is overwhelming. A young teacher in a school in the rural South committed an indiscretion in a casual afternoon's enjoyment. The young man who was in her company was equally to blame, and as a matter of fact the blunder of which the two young persons were guilty was little more than an accident. But the condemnation of the community, after a swift and hurried discussion, fell like a sudden storm upon the girl and she was forced to leave the place. One might give numberless instances of this cruelty with which rural communities force their collective opinion upon their members. Sinclair Lewis wrote a tragic chapter in "Main Street" to express this habit of country people.

The writer believes that the source of this intolerant state of mind, which busies itself in correcting the supposed misconduct of neighbors, lies in the effort of country people to form a social organization, and to

[1] "Ireland in the New Century," Sir Horace Plunkett. Dutton.

maintain it, that will compel moral conduct and sustain the institutions of life. In larger communities a greater tolerance is possible because society is obviously complete there and its power is adequately represented. Urban society has policemen and judges. Indeed, every doorkeeper is a policeman and the conductor of every public vehicle a magistrate in little, to enforce the code of conduct which is necessary to the congested life of the city. But in the country, society is cruder and more clumsy. It has virtually no paid executives. The exercise, therefore, of the rural code is harsh and the blow when it falls is heavy, the judgment often unjust.

Such habits as were connected with the saloon in earlier times seemed to undermine the family government which is the mode of social organization proper to agriculture. Farmers will do anything to maintain the ordinary way of life on which their existence depends. Therefore they see red when they are told that a man is drunk and abuses his wife or is cruel to his children. They cling to domestic virtues as a sailor in a fishing-boat on the wide sea clings to his steering-gear. Family integrity is a life-and-death matter to the tillers of the soil. As the family farm predominates in the country, they instinctively rise to its defense, because without it there could be no life for them, no industry, and no dignity or reward. Therefore the farmer has a radical antagonism to alcoholic indulgence. His church expresses this antagonism. The destruction of "the liquor business" was decreed by country churches thirty years ago.

The same explanation must suffice for the extremes to

which the hooded orders have gone, in recent years, in the Southwest and middle West. The story of the sudden growth of the Klan has been written, but not the record of its activities, and one might err in either direction if he attempted to state how general have been the beatings and the punishments administered to individuals for supposed moral wrong-doing. There can be no doubt, however, that the members of these secret orders have punished many men deserving of punishment, for intemperance, for the illegal sale of liquor, and for domestic offenses.[2]

Two other explanations may be added. These excesses are of the post-war period. Men who have been overwhelmed in the agony of a bloody conflict are prone to excesses. Besides this, the government of rural communities is very lax. Many who live in the country know but little in their daily life of the operation of any government. Once a year they pay their taxes because they have to, and periodically they vote if it is not too inconvenient, but they live a life removed from official control. This life they prefer, but as they become possessed with the desire to control their neighbors for the supposed good of family life and of the community, they never turn to local officers of local government for the remedy. Having little experience of government, they turn to the churches, which are for them the natural exponents of society. They support ministers in violent expressions and prefer those who denounce and condemn without mercy.

[2] "The Challenge of the Klan," Stanley Frost. Bobbs-Merrill. 1923.

Only recently have Americans realized the corruption and inefficiency of local government. We have been engaged for more than a generation in a hurried reform of city government. Appalled at the growth of cities and stirred by the abuses which are evident on so large a scale in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, we have turned our moral attention to those great centers, forgetting that in the town and the country are officials on whom public opinion expends little of its notice. County government in particular, which prevails throughout all the country except New England, as an area of administration, is lax and indifferent.[3] The county official seeks to serve out his term with as little public notice as possible. He wants his salary and his small dignity, and hopes to escape severe exertion or criticism. He generally succeeds.

In many of the States county officials, though vaguely subject to the control of the governor, are really independent of him. Their conduct has no regular or even practicable supervision. They can do as they please. To them, unfortunately, comes the great body of misdemeanors and crimes, for trial and adjustment. In the majority of the acts of the county government that are brought to public attention, it performs its duty well. Indeed, the fiscal routine of county administration is satisfactorily carried out. But for the purpose of expressing the moral sentiment of the families engaged in the agricultural industry, and the

[3] See "Our Neglected Counties," and other publications of "American City"; also "County Administration," C. C. Maxey. Macmillan. 1919.

prevalent convictions as to individual conduct, family integrity, the protection of women, the sheltering of children, county government is impotent so far as the officers who should function are concerned. It is too often corrupt. Here is a reason for the development of these great intolerant and passionate moral movements which have astonished the nation and made the American people peculiar in the world.

If the prohibition reform had contented itself with local option and so had established the control of individuals and of families by means of courts and executive officers in the locality, we should have benefited as a nation in the slower moral development of our people. But because of the breakdown of local government, the impotence of county government, the corruption and uselessness of many local officers—whose number is legion indeed—rural America has turned in desperation to the national government for the enforcement of a law to protect the family. We have the strange spectacle of many good men in country towns, notably a large number of ministers of country churches, supporting the violent and cruel secret organizations because they provide an effective local police. They intimidate wrong-doers; they accomplish what the proper officials fail to accomplish.

How serious this evil is one cannot at the present time say. It may be that we are becoming so unified as a nation through instant communication, motor transportation, perfected railroad systems, and a swiftly extending network of highways, that we can act together

as a nation on a great scale. One must not look backward only and idealize local government alone, but the present writer believes that the breakdown of our system of local self-control is a great loss to the nation. He does not hope for gains from an effective centralized government in Washington that can in any degree compensate for the loss of what the community should do for itself.

What is the duty of the farmer's church in this moral crisis? A tolerant and broad-minded minister would be unwelcome in most American communities. The atmosphere of censure and moral domineering is so general and so contagious that few can resist it. It penetrates to any mean or weak element in the nature of a well-meaning and high-minded man. It is likely to overcome his scruples and to force him, whether he will or not, to become a censor and an accuser. The first duty of the church is to resist this intolerant spirit and to teach a respect for men of all nations. The social program of the congregation and the missionary work of the church as a whole may accomplish much in this regard.

Probably the best corrective of defects and the most effectual means to the attainment of a larger spirit is to be found in the recreational organization of the church. If a country church has a meeting-place for all the people, if it maintains a forum for the discussion of large affairs, if it has a room for the quotation of market statements, if it has frequent social gatherings in which men may accustom themselves to one another and to a

variety of meetings of many kinds of persons and on many occasions, the intolerant spirit will be dissolved and a sweet reasonableness will prevail.

There is only one sure medicine for the sickness of American moral opinion. Public opinion rightly directed is a noble force. It is well to live in a community where no policeman is needed. It is far better for a community to govern itself than to be in fear of the man in uniform. Public opinion can be healed of its diseases by an experience of the world and of the interests of all mankind. Nothing else will purge it of intolerance and cruelty. The interests common to the peoples of the modern world express themselves in trade, in credit, in education, in health, in recreation, in music, in dramatic art, as well as in the missionary work of the churches. These are the elements that ought to organize the community. They are in themselves a school of moral values. When a country community is organized, with a house of its own for the embodiment of these international interests and for the discussion of their developing programs, for the enjoyment of their processes, that community will have a moral code which is tolerant, wise, and effective for conserving what is good in family life and in personal character, as well as conducive to progress.

CHAPTER XIV

COUNTRY-CHURCH FINANCES

MANY country churches were established in religious zeal; many of those which have suffered and died perished under a financial blight. This is not to say that zeal is always good and finance is always evil. The fact is that a grant of money has been essential to the beginning of a majority of the churches in the country, and religious zeal has had its part in the destruction of some. But the period of the country-church decline has been a period of financial exploitation. The money test has been applied to all things. Many churches could not endure it and have perished before the advance of financial prosperity as if it were a pestilence. A minister in New York, who serves country churches on the border of a small city, says, "Most little churches in this country that have been closed were the sufferers at the last from a quarrel over finance."

There is a financial depression of the farm in industry, but the difficulties of the country church are not identified with this depression. Its lack, as compared with other churches, is expressed in the efficiency of local financiers. It needs a reconstruction of its buildings and a funding of national resources for

the sustaining of weak churches. The way out for the country church is not in an ill-paid, inefficient ministry or an unpaid minister who works in the fields, but in the enlistment of men of high faith and human sympathy under adequate economic support.

Finances have a moral and spiritual character of their own which the present generation has reluctantly admitted. Money has an extraordinary mobility. It is an assembly of the infinitely little for the accomplishment of great things. This description fits church work. Vast hopes have long been cherished by people with small estates and petty incomes. The perfection of financial means in our time has suited religious people, for it has enabled them, of little gifts, to make huge budgets. This is a lesson that country people need to learn from men in cities. They have not acquired the ways of using money that city people know. They are therefore weak because they cannot assemble into great masses the wealth they have, and they do not see the value of small contributions in amassing large funds.

Money touches almost everything we do. Country people are now the buyers of goods such as their grandsires once made. So that money touches them whenever they handle a tool, or button a coat, or set the table. It is important that the farm population learn to consecrate this use of wealth to a divine purpose. It is probable that the money gifts of many persons to the churches have helped them to get away from the former distinction between sacred and secular. It may seem that in their thinking about men and material they

have merely erased the false line between the holy and the common.

There are in the country many congregations which still refuse to have anything to do with money. Many people condemn the paid preacher; they logically follow through to the condemnation of expensive church equipment and costly programs. One's mind would gladly follow them if it were not that the churches they organize are emotional and narrow in their outlook and generally short-lived. But American experience and the understanding we have of spiritual life lead us to believe that the church in the country as well as in the city must address itself to the consecration of its financial resources to the Lord.

First of all the farmer's church needs a thorough safeguarding of the gifts of the people. Every church should have a secular board, if its monies are not handled by the minister under a denominational rule. In any case, the contributions of farmers should be administered for the attainment of confidence and efficiency.

All money should be handled by two persons, not by one alone. Every penny should be accounted for under constant publicity. When a collection is made, it should be counted by two persons and one should carry the offering away for deposit, the other should keep a record of amounts collected. Every expenditure should be audited by a disinterested third party or committee at least once a year. The congregation should be kept informed frequently—that is, as often as four times a

year—of the amount in each fund of the church and of the use to which it is being put. If the objection is made that the country church has no persons sufficiently able for this service, the answer is that the women in the country are peculiarly suited to the care of funds and they should be entrusted with at least their share of this responsibility. For instance, if a man and a woman should count the offerings every Sunday and on every occasion of receiving funds, the one, preferably the man, should be entrusted with the cash, the other, the woman, should keep the record.

Church funds should also be deposited in a public place, preferably in the nearest bank in an account in the name of the church and of the fund to which the money belongs. The account should be open to inquiry and inspection by any citizen of the community. If a bank is not convenient for weekly deposit, the funds should be entrusted to a merchant or other experienced business man, who should be instructed to welcome inquiry.

The purpose of publicity concerning the funds of the church is the establishment of the same confidence in regard to church money as prevails in the handling of funds throughout the business world. Country churches fail because their financial standards are inferior to those of the merchant and the banker, who profess no exceptional moral standards, but meet the obligations incident to trust funds. A church treasurer who is unwise enough to handle public money without audit, inspection, or report deserves to be severely condemned,

and the church that permits him to do so is likely to be destroyed.

Great advancement has been made in a generation toward the sanctifying of the individual gifts to the Lord. The envelop system, as it is called, is a democratic method of contribution in which the gifts of the poor have the same appearance as the gifts of the rich. The envelop filled with pennies weighs as much as one filled with dollars. The envelop system also is one of regular contribution suited to an industrialized people who live a regular life. It fits the wage-earner and the salaried man perfectly. It does not so well fit the irregular income of the country, where wages are paid to but few and income is not periodically received, but it assists country people by a weekly reminder that at every service of worship they have a part that is voluntary whereby to express themselves.

But the envelop system, indeed the whole organization of finance which prevails in Protestant churches, is an expression of a fellowship of service and of purpose, the power of which has not been yet fully realized. The different Protestant communions, founded as they are in an original unity of belief and an experience of hospitality, are, as they become more worldly-wise and less simple, kept together by common purposes of service to the world and to the nation. They give their money and they offer themselves to the extension of the ideals they possess: that is, to the enlargement of their fellowship. They undertake to back their ideals with their gifts; they have a great pride in the size of the amounts

they give. Some denominations are animated by a fellowship of giving. The whole enterprise of church finance has become a bond of union, because it is an expression of a common purpose.

The small community has responded better than the large one to the big financial drives. These undertakings have impressed the members of small churches as they do not impress the more experienced church members. No other bond has been felt with so great force, by the little churches, as the opportunity offered them to contribute to the large funds raised by the denominations. The great drives during the World War brought surprising returns from the people in the little towns and in the open country. Never before had they found their way into the fellowship of big enterprises. They entertained the same ideas and had the same purpose, but no opportunity had come to them for the expression, in a practical way, of their faith and their sympathy. The writer is convinced, therefore, from observation of country churches in the past ten years, that the experience of systematic giving will extend among them and provide a stimulus to common response on a large scale.

The experience of doing business is one of the advantages, to obscure persons, offered by systematic giving. This, I think, is why women enter into church work, especially the business activities of the church, with such zeal. Money is the most far-reaching medium offered to their control. They can express themselves in caring for church funds even if they cannot speak, or write, or administer large affairs. Systematic giv-

ing also teaches order and regularity. It provides a framework of purpose that undergirds the whole structure of religion, and it tends to make religious habits regular.

The small country churches give more, in proportion to their numbers and financial abilities, than do the large churches. This surprising discovery is made by Mr. Luther Fry in his careful sifting of the materials of the Interchurch World Movement. In his book "Diagnosing the Rural Church" he says:

> The churches in rich counties do not give a larger proportion of their income to missionary and benevolent enterprises than churches in poor areas give. Indeed, the smallest proportions donated to benevolences were contributed not in the group of poorest counties but in the $20,000 to $30,000 farm-value group. . . . It means that the church members in wealthy areas are not contributing their proportionate shares to the benevolent enterprises of their denominations. True, our prosperously situated churches give about the same percentage of their total budget to benevolence as do the poor churches; but since it has already been shown that this total budget steadily declines in relative value as economic conditions improve, it follows that contributions to benevolences also show a downward tendency when considered in relation to the means at the disposal of the people. In other words, if we think of benevolences in terms of the financial sacrifices involved, rather than in terms of dollars and cents, the poor counties make a far better showing than the more wealthy areas.

Mr. Fry finds this disproportion so general in the gifts of the counties studied that he exhorts the de-

nominational executives to assess a larger proportionate quota upon the larger and wealthier churches, than upon those in poorer areas of the country, in order better to distribute the load. He gives as reason for this greater giving of the smallest churches, which are most numerous in the poorer farming sections, the fact that the church program is about the same in both sections and costs nearly the same amount to maintain, and that it is therefore a matter of sheer survival for the poorer churches to pay that which the wealthier ones contribute with ease. The very existence of religion being at stake in smaller and poorer places of worship, those who worship there have a training in giving which is denied to the richer churches.

What has been said cannot apply to a good many small religious enterprises. We have, and we ought to have, in the country many little chapels in which men have small responsibility. They are places of worship and meeting only. It is impossible to plan for their congregations an elaborate system of giving, nor would it be well if it could be done. These small preaching-places and "chapels of ease" should be organized under the lead of central churches, that have good ministers and express in a complete way the participation of the worshiper in the big affairs of Christendom. Such a church should be within driving distance of every farm-house. There should be in every hamlet a well-organized congregation, and within easy reach a minister in residence. These two requirements necessitate a systematic organization of the giving of the people.

The beginnings of church administration are at this

point. Many superintendents who have not yet dreamed that theirs is an art that may be taught, are attentive to the financial side of church work. It is unfortunate that the only management they know is the management of money: but it is well to make a beginning somewhere. Let us be thankful that the small church is coming under a systematic rule, that its processes are brought to book at one point. We may hope that in a generation the other measurable elements of church work will be as well superintended.

What, then, are the elements of finance for the small church?

First, the farmer's church ought to be taught the importance and the spiritual worth of money. Its people are to learn from many sources that money is expected of them. They should learn that this is well and not ill, that it is good and not bad. For the farmer desires money for himself; he ought to be consistent enough to desire it for the Lord. It is not sufficient for the minister to preach and teach about the mission causes promoted by the church. The mind of country people is dogmatic, speculative; they dream and reason much. They rationalize everything. The minister must, therefore, do more than exhort them to support particular causes. They must be taught the philosophy underlying the financial mobilization of wealth.

Agriculture itself is being valued at every point in dollars and cents. The farmer's church, in the same manner, must learn to give in order that the church may be the ideal expression of its members. If the farmer goes to market and gets money for goods, then he must

go to church and give money to the Lord, or his life will be inconsistent and his religion ineffective. So that the preacher must be a prophet of the modern spirit. He must teach the spiritual value of material things, especially the spiritual joy of contribution.

Secondly, the church in the country ought to learn to give rather than to raise money by indirection. The chief expenses of the church should be met by contribution directly made. It is well to give entertainments for a charge, but it is much more important that those who trade in the small values of the religious group should express their relation to the church in proportionate and systematic giving.

In supplement to the free gifts, every church in the country might well develop a second kind of finance in connection with the organized recreative life of the church. Entertainments ought to be paid for, lectures may be marketed, stereopticon and moving-picture shows should more than pay for themselves. These enterprises ought not to be despised or called unspiritual. The church needs a great variety of members, and some persons, whose spirituality is not of the lowest, enjoy doing business in the interest of religion. Frequently one meets a man or woman in business whose ideals are of the highest, whose character is excellent, but who proposes a business enterprise in connection with the church. There are many commodities that are by-products of a religious society. These ought not to be given away, but should be sold. No church should depend, however, upon profits from the sale of its by-products; its dependence should be upon

the gifts of the people, because the church is a school of giving in a population commercialized. But the commercial spirit is good, not evil, the joy of trading is very human. It is quite as worthy as the joy of preaching or singing, and some persons have more to offer in the way of trade, others in the way of song or rhetoric. A church should not despise the contributions of the trader, but welcome them and use them.

The community church is a many-celled organization. The heart of it is a place of worship, but the services it renders to the community are in many cases merchantable and they should be sold. Some of them should pay for themselves and relieve the church of expense. A few of them should bring in revenue.

An important factor in the development of the small church is the separation of the services rendered by the church from the other religious activities. The one ought not to depend for financial support upon the other. Services should be paid for, worship should be a gift. The offices responsible for community work ought to be organized separately and should function in a way of their own, so as not to interfere with the work and activities of worship, religious education, and the care of souls. For instance, the community house at Lingle, Wyoming, has a community board under whose care are all the operations of the house. The church has its own officers and its own expenses; its canvass for contributions is made in the month of March. The community house has its expenses, some of which are of a business character. Its canvass for subscriptions is made in the month of November. The two canvasses

are so managed as to interfere in no way with each other. The even more separate character of a community house in California is exhibited in the fact that the property is owned not by the congregation but by the Presbytery of which the congregation is a member. Experience shows that this method of financing social work under a separate board and by a special process is more effectual than the management of the whole by the so-called spiritual officers.

Probably the highest value of financial management of church affairs is the training it gives to the individual and to the pastor who is interested in the development of personality. There is a thrill in finding the man for the task and the task for the man. The good manager knows what a day's work is, and many a small church has justified itself to the minister and to the members by the experience of joy in responsibility given and responsibility undertaken. I remember a humble Christian in a small church who had never found his place. He had few abilities and those he had were hidden by a modesty and dignity that gave him beauty and imparted a glow to his person. Almost by accident he assumed the care of church property. At once his whole life took on for himself and his fellow members a value that it had never had before.

The development of church business offers an inviting field, therefore, to the members and the minister in small communities for the development of personal character. Some of the largest enterprises of the present world, projects which span the earth and plumb the depths of human experience, are discussed in the

meetings of church stewards and deacons in a village parsonage. Doctrine no longer unites men with so penetrating a sympathy as the management of the gifts of humble Christians to the missionary and benevolent enterprises of the church.

CHAPTER XV

A WORD TO BISHOPS AND SECRETARIES

THE city, the bishop, and quantity production in religion are growing dangers to the farmer's church. All of them are modern dangers. They express the competing forces of the present day organized for conquest and extension. They are impersonal, while the country church is individualistic. They are authoritative in the face of its independence. They brook no opposition, but rule by concentrated force.

The city claims what it desires. Ministers of country churches are hypnotized by the attentions of city churches and unable to resist their call. The modern city claims as its own what it requires for the growth of its extraordinary life. There was never anything like it before, and other forms of life are unprepared for its attack. The city grows with ever-accelerating speed. In its plans for transit as well as in its quest of supplies of water, the city knows no limit in its aggression. To other and small communities the city comes with no discussion of equal interests, but as a rapacious creature armed with power beyond appeal. Chicago argues that if it is not permitted to draw more

of the water of the lakes into its drainage canal, the sewage incident to its vastly increased size will pollute the ways of life of all the people of the middle West. New York reaches out one hundred miles to take the waters of a peaceful river to satisfy its necessities, though to do so means the destruction of a score of towns that have dwelt upon its banks for as long as New York has dwelt by the salt ocean. They have no recourse. In fact, the forces commanded by the city are of such a character as to forestall opposition. Probably the farmers and villagers whose lands New York city paid for, that it might flood them, were willing to sell. For the city commands the ways of modern life.

In church matters the city influence works with as ruthless a hand as in civics or finance. City ministers assume and exercise immunity for the administrative machinery of the church. The churches in cities do the same; their officers speak with condescension of the conference, presbytery, or association to which they belong. Methodist churches in cities have for a generation been independent of the itineracy, choosing their pastors freely and requiring the bishop's assent. By the same process rural churches are the more enslaved to the bishop's mandate.

The administrator of church work ought to be the friend of the small and weak. The bishop should exist to help equalize the resources of the church so that the poor should have their share, and to lift the strain from the weak to the shoulders of the strong. But alas! most administrators exploit the country churches in the interest of every "larger call." Bishops and other admin-

istrators have no other class of churches under their hands so great in numbers or so useful to authority as the rural churches. So that these congregations among the farmers or along the village street, that in their nature are most independent, are become the pawns in the denominational game. Those in the neighborhood of theological seminaries are made use of by the seminary. Before them students preach, for the stipend paid, "in order that they might support themselves while in seminary." The rural churches enjoy the process so long as they survive. Their "student supplies" seldom give them any vital service, being concerned with "higher" interests. Many of them live meagerly, and some die of starvation, because they are exploited, not served, by student preachers.

These congregations are treated as statistical quantities, and all interest in the individual church is sunk in the mass effect. The denominations are instructed in quantity production. They desire numbers, both of members and of congregations. The many small congregations seem to offer the field in which campaigns will produce results and programs will multiply the numbers reported. As a matter of experience, the latest decade of church history in the United States has been a time of the most energetic campaigning since the days of Peter the Hermit and of the Black Prince, yet two of the strongest denominations have had to record great losses among their rural churches. Campaigns and programs will never revive; they can only exploit and weaken the farmer's church. Of all our churches, it is the most sensitive to the spirit and the teaching. Give

the farmer's church—which hates the harness of management—a message, infuse it with life, and it will grow: exploit it as a shop product of religion and it will die.

One of the injustices of mass control of country churches is the church year. In American Protestant churches we have no saints, but the year is full of "days." There is a Children's Day, Mother's Day, Rally Day, and each reform dear to a section of the church people claims its day. The baffled and hard-working pastor is assailed with demands for a day on which to advocate the claims of many "outside" causes. He scarce has time to preach, unless he turns aside the demands, that come with weighty authority, for the recital from his pulpit of right or wrong, good or evil, in respect to some "problem."

But the churches themselves have a round of work that must be distributed in the course of the year. Rally Day is appointed for the early autumn because then in city churches people have resumed church attendance after the summer holiday. The country churches do not need to be rallied in the autumn. To them the summer is the most active period. They should be rallied at Easter-time, in the spring. Again, the Annual Every-Member Canvass of Protestant churches, for the soliciting of subscriptions for the church budget, is placed by authority in the month of March. There could not be a worse time in the year for churches dependent upon the farmer. At that season he has to lay out money. His crop must be put into the ground. His heaviest expenses are then in the immediate future. His church canvass should come in the

month of November, when in the north-temperate climate he has harvested and marketed his crops. If he is in funds at any season in the year, he has money then. Why should the farmer be called on to subscribe to the church budget of expenditures just when he must borrow for the season's heaviest investment? In this manner the process of church work is distributed in accordance with the finances of the few churches in the cities, and not in accordance with the finances of the great majority which are in the big towns and in the open country, where the conditions of farm life prevail.

The rhythm of church life is thus placed in recognition of the city because city men have organized the church year, but in most Protestant denominations the country churches—that is, those in communities of ten thousand or less in population—are about 80 per cent. of the total number, and the city churches, which are not dependent upon the farmer for their seasonal process, are less than 20 per cent. in number. Thus 80 per cent. of the ministers are required to conform to the convenience of 20 per cent. of the ministers. It is true that the city churches have more than 20 per cent. of the membership, but city churches are less dependent upon denominational arrangements. The system is thus a disadvantage to the more numerous country churches, yet it is pursued with calm disregard of the needs of the greater number: who are more in need of administrative service.

The system of benevolences of the churches proceeds by the assignment of a quota to the rural churches. But a careful study, such as was made by C. Luther Fry

in "Diagnosing the Rural Church," shows that the quota is laid with unjust severity upon the small church. After demonstrating that the country church gives more, in proportion to its wealthy members, than the city church does, and that the poor counties in the country give with greater sacrifice than the richer churches give, because the cost of running a small church is about the same as running a big one, Mr. Fry says:

> The explanation of this lies in the fact that the small church from a purely financial point of view is an expensive operating unit. The ordinary church program requires that members secure the services of a minister and keep the church building in repair, besides meeting certain denominational assessments. If the membership is very small these few people must meet these basic requirements or disband. Thus, in a church of small membership giving on a relatively large scale is a necessity; while in a church with many members the expenses are spread over the larger number and therefore involve less cost to the individual, and a small church in spite of its increased running expenses is usually asked to contribute exactly the same amount of money for these items (missions and benevolences) as a large church.

Mr. Fry then shows that the larger church lays upon its members a proportionately smaller share of running expenses, and he adds:

> It might be desirable to assess the large churches in accordance with a sliding scale, so that churches with large membership would be asked to give larger donations per member than small churches. . . . In churches of small membership giving becomes a life or death matter to the church and the individual members therefore make comparatively

large sacrifices; while in a church of large membership the costs of operation are borne by a larger number and thus less money is required from each member.

If this argument is correct, then the distribution of a denominational quota should be so organized in responsible communions as to distribute the load and to increase the willingness with which it is borne, as well as to secure the larger total for the general work of the church in the world. These benevolence quotas are a new experience of the churches. They are as yet crudely organized. The church officials who have the matter in charge have had no time to perfect their approach with a fair regard for the varying conditions of church life. Is it unfair to ask that the knowledge of the country church now in our possession be employed as a means of securing justice in the development of this new experience?

The spirit of mass production in religion demands the extension of the church. We must every year hear of more units added. Profound disappointment is expressed in any denomination that fails to report a large number of accessions on confession of faith in any given year. Even the daily newspapers commented adversely in years following the war upon those communions that did not report an increase. The appetite for an increased membership and for a greater number of contributions is universal. The time has come when the extension of the church cannot be carried on without injustice to the country people, unless denominations make as much of reconciling their differences in the small

communities as they do of extending into unchurched places. The mere pressure to place a church of every denomination in every community has become an abuse that makes the churches ashamed; while the number of places unchurched, that know not the Gospel by the teaching of any of the great communions, is still considerable. Reliable information[2] concerning the 73,230 different communities that have less than 5000 population is to the effect that 10,461 of them have no church of any denomination; that 33,800 have churches but no resident minister; and that 16,258 more lack a full-time resident minister. The remaining 12,711 communities, being 21 per cent. of all town and country communities, in which dwell 28 per cent. of the town and country population, have full-time resident pastors.

Unseemly conditions are revealed such as appear in the statement that "the denominations seem now to be sending their strong man to the weak church in the overchurched community and their weak minister to the promising field where there is no other church." Competition puts religion to death. If we are to continue to extend, we must learn in every denomination a technique of coöperation with other faiths like our own. The genius for extension is a very precious thing in the American churches. It has stimulated them to reach every community in the United States. As the population has flowed out to possess the land, preachers have followed to sanctify home life and to lay social foundations. No other type of social work has equaled the

[2] "The Town and Country Church," Morse and Brunner. Doran. 1923.

churches' power of extension, unless it be the public school which, like popular religion, has organized its units in every small place. The churches have extended their Sunday-schools I suppose beyond any other voluntary type of human organization in the United States.

The little congregations have set up their altars in every place where men could meet. There is danger that this spirit will be discouraged if we do not by authority persuade and by administrative arrangements determine that the abuses incident to extension are not in the end to overcome its benefits in the minds of the American people.

There are certain measures that ought now to be taken by church officials. Granted that the spirit of competition is in the very minds of Americans, there remains still a field in which the church administrator can effect changes. Up to this date no denomination of which I know is promoting comity. The best of the denominations contribute of their means to the Federal Council, Home Missions Council, to state, city, and county federations, which zealous men maintain. But no communion makes coöperation with other bodies a regular part of its work as all of them make extension a regular objective. I hope to see in the early future a plan of comity proposed not alone by a federation, which has no authority, but by a conference, an association, a classis, or a presbytery; in which resides the power of Protestants to act. Suppose, for instance, one of these governing bodies should after discussion of the situation within its bounds decide upon a program about as follows, which its min-

isters must announce in communities suffering from denominational competition:

1 This church ministers in this community in competition with fellow churches of like tradition with ourselves unwillingly.

2 We find that summary withdrawal from the community is impracticable.

3 This congregation therefore makes the following offers: conditional upon their acceptance by other [specified] congregations:—

a We will unite with other like churches in as many services of worship in the round of the year and in the course of each week as possible.

b We offer to unite with others [specified] in maintaining a common Sunday-school.

4 We offer to federate this church with any other of like faith and tradition on the following terms:

a The churches federated shall enter with equal rights, each preserving its integrity in a local congregation. This local congregation may be visited by the local denominational superintendents; its component members shall be reported each to his own denomination regularly. Each member of the federated church may contribute to the denomination of his choice and the regular contributions for benevolences shall be distributed to the denominations entering into the federation in equal parts. Each congregation shall regularly function, under the leadership of the pastor to be chosen by all.

b The control of all local expenses shall be in the federated congregation as a whole, which shall meet at least once a year for the election of common officers and the determination of questions that concern the community and the

congregation. One minister shall be appointed to have charge of the congregation and he shall be chosen freely by the federated church acting as one body.

5 This congregation, in view of the situation, offers whenever a like offer is made by one, two or more [specified] congregations serving in this community to hold a meeting in common with them, officially announced, at which shall be determined the future of the work of these congregations in this community.

If any denomination were to commit itself, through one of its authoritative bodies, to such a program of comity, it would disarm criticism, it would win to itself many adherents who are impatient of the present competitive system, and it would break the dead-lock in certain communities, as well as save monies now expended in hopeless competition, and the energies of pastors that are spent in humiliating strife. Above all, the church officials should realize that the strain upon ministers who are called on to serve in competitive fields is beyond the endurance of the human spirit. Religion cannot survive in the hearts of men who are commanded by their church to minister in country towns where there are too many churches and where competition rather than coöperation is made the Christian duty.

Further, the denominational leaders should take measures now, when their people no longer believe that salvation is for their sect alone, to keep the Kingdom of God before the mind of every member of the community. The present state of mind of the church member is engaged not upon the Kingdom but upon his church. The

minister and the parishioner in the usual small community in the United States has in mind all the processes of the community, except what other churches are doing. Ask a man who lives in a town of less than ten thousand population what the other church is doing. As a rule he will cast the question lightly aside, or if pressed, will be found ignorant about it. He usually knows about the Catholic Church in a way, but about the Protestant churches other than his own he knows nothing; yet he is informed about the fire department, the library, and the Red Cross. If he is a Presbyterian, his mind is impregnable to facts about the Baptist Church. There ought to be maps kept before the minds of all members by the leading denominations which would show all the churches of any given place. In the future it should be considered a spiritual offense to draw a map or make a reference to a community without regard to the whole of religious life in that place. How far from this is our present practice!

The most important service to be rendered by these means will be the uniting of Protestantism for an approach to the unoccupied fields and the building in needy communities, by devoted workers, of church plants suitable to the needs of the people who live there. We cannot forever extend if we lose the support of those men and women in our churches who would be offended by competition. The sums to be controlled by the churches are limited. They will do well if they keep these funds from decreasing—supposing that their total will not be greatly increased—and use them for the ex-

tension of the Gospel and the building of adequate edifices in every part of the United States and her possessions.

In the first century of extension of American churches no strong control was necessary; not even an intensive supervision of the congregations was required. But that time is at an end. Authority is now indeed only indirect. The power of bishops is not absolute and in theory administrators have no control. But by the genius of these Protestant churches the administrator has come to the front in the past twenty years. The more independent of the churches have lodged the greater power in the hands of chosen men, selected for this purpose without ornate installation or formal title, who have a great responsibility. These administrators, bishops, and secretaries are still puzzled to know what is their function and what their power. The opposition to their appointment has failed to forestall the committal of great funds to them. Their opportunity has come. The service they should render is the redirecting of the spirit of extension by ending the abuse of competition, equipping the weaker communities with buildings and a service adequate to the needs of American Christianity and thus girding the national religion up for its task upon this continent. This responsibility is a trust committed to the church administration.

CHAPTER XVI

TO THE PREACHER

IT becomes the preacher to be modest, to-day. Plainly, we are not to save the world by preaching. Outside the churches better preaching is sometimes done than within them. There are newspaper preachers and radio homilists. Every school-teacher exhorts. Politicians attain their ends if they have a prophetic gift. Reformers are eloquent in use of religious arguments. It would appear at present that preaching is not a function peculiar to the church; and, alas! many who are called to preach do not excel as orators but survive by the possession of some other gifts unsuspected before! It becomes evident that preaching is simply the service for which ministers are paid. It is the metal that is coined to provide a currency of the churches. A price can be put, without great damage to spiritual things, upon the homiletic gift. It would not be safe to charge for other things done by a shepherd of souls. Most of the work of a man of God is unpaid and should be beyond price. But it does no great harm to commercialize the pulpit as we have done. At least, if there is poison in it, we have digested the poison and accommodated our spiritual organism to its ill effects. We want more

preaching, and for the sake of the great good it discovers we can stand all the damages it does.

Probably the minister of religion is more often useful in his services on the day of trouble and of joy,—as a philosopher to whom the sinner can go, as an adviser of the young, a companion dear to the aged,—when he helps men bear the burden and meet the problems of life. Power to fill each rôle is a rare gift sent from heaven. Prophetic gifts are given to very few, but many a commonplace man, by the devotion of his spirit, by the candor of his invincible self-sacrifice, has brought men near to God and testified dumbly in the language of habits, so well as to secure assent that eloquence could not have gotten. Great preaching has a high place, and it requires rare ability to perform well that part. The great sermon and the great address will be made by few, but they will be circulated extensively in the press, over the radio, at political meetings, and in the huge gatherings of churchmen that occur almost every year.

There will always be occasion for great preaching. But in every community we need the voice of the preacher concerning daily matters. The materials of homily are worn out. The preacher ought to turn aside from the path of present custom and dignify the common life. He should choose humbler topics than he does, covering a wider variety, and reach more intimately into the life of the people. The time has come when we can preach as a voice bade us long ago:

> Cleave the wood and you will find me:
> Lift the stone and there am I.

The poet is an inspired man and we ought not to be deaf forever to his voice when he tells us "there are sermons in stones, books in the running brooks." We should turn aside from the polemical tracts and commentaries, from the conventional theology, and hear the Master's voice in the daily round of life. There alone did he speak when his voice was heard. But under Greek influence we have systematized the teachings of Christ. We made them political teachings in the middle ages. And nowadays we in the United States are harnessing the power of Christ to our temporary reforms.

The life of people in the country is full of strain and sacrifice; it has joy and worth which preachers ought to see and exalt. Instead they draw their images from ancient wars and old pilgrimages, from prophetic interpretations of days that are long past, the meaning of which is not quite clear to us who live to-day. The preacher ought to be a prophet of religious life to young people. He should forget that he belongs to a caste. Let him speak to the heart of the man who works fourteen hours a day in an ill-paid occupation, animated by the love of the land and of the care of cattle, the desire to support his family, and the dream of feeding the world. The minister is very often a farmer's son, but as preacher he forgets the religion that was his father's and talks about the religion of the clergyman. He tries to impose on a hard-working population the ethics and ideals of a non-productive, salaried profession.

No man can advise another except to point the road. I have a few suggestions to make that may indicate the

path the preacher ought to take if he would build up the church among those who produce.

There is high authority for the prohibition that forbids the minister to preach farming; and, for my part, I suppose good manners would forbid his direct exhortation as to better farm practices. But who would forbid his preaching fertility, which is the mysterious work of the Creator? It differs from creation, which a man can accomplish; for the human factor is so small in fertility and the divine so amazingly great.

A prairie farmer planted soy-beans upon acres which had for years been producing twenty bushels, and the production mounted at once to seventy bushels of golden corn. What a miraculous increase! For years the toil upon that impoverished land had been increasingly hard; each season it had been less rewarding. Now the tiller of the soil is confronted with God. He realizes the Creator's plans to feed the world. Fertility means less labor for men, more enjoyment of divine miracle.

Yet the human factor in fertilization is essential. Nature is profuse and inconstant. Man has to administer for his needy race the providence of God. The basis of this administration of fertility is the service of domestic plants and animals. He plants the former, cherishes their better seed strains; selects and breeds and feeds the latter, with the end in view of the greatest production. Through the control of these creatures of God, man is able to live on earth in that degree of comfort and vigor which befits Christian living.

Without this surplus created by the excessive production of wheat, and the abundance of the udder of the cow, it would be impossible, so far as I can see, for the Bible-reading Christians to be on earth. Is it possible for a people without sheep to live generally after the Bible manner? Can a nation that does not eat meat daily worship God after the dictates of its own conscience? I think not. If the time ever comes when men cannot wear a wool coat they will not long be Protestants.

Right here comes an encouragement to preach fertility, for it is usually not granted man unless he at least strikes the rock for water more times than Moses did. Few lands respond without the application of brains and sweat, even to the rotation of corn, wheat, and clover. Only with stress and strain does fertility reward the farmer; and the struggle makes for character. To touch the hand of God under the soil, where He creates and multiplies, develops manhood, piety, constancy, austerity, heroism. I heard Jared van Wagenen—who is the third Dutch Jared on the same farm near the Catskill Mountains—say that we may thank God his secrets of the soil are uncovered with difficulty and his treasures inherited with toil; because the toil makes men, and the difficulties toughen Christian character.

The time seems to have come again in the world for men to preach fertility; and again the spirit to do it is here. Famine has come back. In China, we were recently told, fifteen millions were to die of hunger before the summer. Fifteen millions to die of hunger,

in a year; whereas in four years of war only eight millions died! If we preach peace, we may as well, for the same reasons, preach fertility; for only by more fertile yields can all men be regularly fed. The old methods which feed China have no margin for a year of crop-failure. There must be a miracle. Some Joseph must dream again. His invention must be recorded at the Patent Office and tested in the laboratories, before China can be sure that famine will not again leap out of the dark winter, to destroy millions.

Famine has come back in a time when we no longer bow the neck to its stroke. A new spirit has come, even since the Thirty Years' War. Coöperative organization has been devised, tested, and extended, which gives to poor producers great collective power. Farm machinery has quickened the horny hand of the man-with-the-hoe into the dexterous fingers of the skilled mechanic, and substituted for the stout back of the reaper the power of the tractor. Leguminous crops have multiplied the yield of the acre and given immortality to old lands, fertility to barren soil. Cow-testing and selective breeding have doubled the butter yield of a nation of cows. Seed-selection has uniformed and controlled the higher yields. Cold storage and grain elevators, with universal, mobile transportation, have given to the world long, unbroken years of uniform supply of food, cheap enough for the poor, at even prices. Yet famine has come!

In spite of all improvements, the margin of the world's food-supply is narrow. The world is astonished

that the reserves which are piled up in banks and warehouses, mobilized by steam transportion, are insufficient. We know the mind of God better than to submit willingly to famine as a yearly experience, or to endure the fear of famine. Yet we see that inventions and devices, useful as they are in multiplying the value of the toil of man, are insufficient. Is prayer, then, our only defense? It prepares us, indeed, for the battle. But men of prayer will do more. In future years missionaries in China will be teaching agriculture, I dare believe, who never before taught anything but words.

Recent years have produced agricultural foreign missionaries, who teach the Hindu what God has taught us about old soils and new crops. They take time from preaching to study fertility; and then go back to preach the providence of God that is waiting in the black clod, the plant, and the dairy cow, as a part of the unsearchable riches of Christ. They represent many thoughtful Christians who believe that only by the power of God can the world's food-supply be made to last. The miracle of the widow's oil and meal is but a symbol of what India will do when foreign missions rise to the boldness and faith of Elijah.

The preacher of fertility discovers that God is not a potentate doing things by special interferences, but a Being of uniform and infallible action, who has foreseen and foreknown; who can be depended on, like tomorrow's sun. The laws of fertility are like those of gravitation. They know no exception. They "cannot excuse themselves for seventy-five-per-cent. perform-

ance." God never changes his mind. Has no moods. Is not easily provoked. Causeth his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust. So that it is important that producers of food know that the providence of God plans through the miracle of fertility to abolish famine from the earth.

It is a true miracle, fertility; it applies to the brain and heart of men as well as to the dust from which they were made. Inventions are the fertility of the brain. They are the workings of God. They have done more good and fed more, clothed more, than all the sermons that preachers have uttered about books and poems and pictures. Think what the inventions of Cyrus McCormick have done to create the type of farmer who lives in the middle West, to make cities; yes, even to give leisure for preachers and poets and writers to incubate immortal messages of inspiration.

During the World War, when our boys must be fed that they might be brave enough to die for ideas, we learned to pray about food. We thought much, then, about farm labor and fertilizers, and came to know the excellence of wheat as a food packed by the Creator for transportation. Surely now that peace has come—has it not come?—we can preach about that for which then we prayed.

The church and the nation are both indebted to the miracle of fertility for their moral power. Therefore the preacher may go to the farm for his theme, to the Bible for his text, and to the people for an assured sympathetic hearing. I suggest as his text Deuteronomy xi. 10–12. May the sermon disclose to the farmer that

he owns some of the land which the Lord his God careth for; that "drinketh water of the rain of heaven."

The preacher should exalt the religion of sacred buildings, for the message the house of worship tells the passer-by is too often a story of neglect. It may be the best evangel to all men. We were touring an old parish where the pastor had remained forty years. He is a power in the country life of three States. Suddenly we came upon a well-kept church and parsonage, with a graveyard stretching behind them. I knew we had arrived at the home of a forty-year pastorate—that this could be no other. I had heard for years of the effective social program of this pastor. At a flash I saw that first in the program of a long pastorate must be the care of the church property.

What a powerful sermon this building preached! How beautifully the Gothic spire with the uplifting of the eyes elevated the feelings! How the well-kept church property on the village street schools the mind in order, thrift, and self-help!

Not long ago I visited three country churches on a cold day. In each there were a score of persons huddled around the stove. The pastor and I stood afar, in the pulpit, with shaking knees, and preached or sang, our chins quivering with the chill in the air. The fires had been lighted in each church only a few minutes before church time. The big vault above never became warm while we were there. The only warmth was in the greetings at the close, for the people love their pastor. Those near the stove were scorched, not warm. The speakers went from the building to their closed car, with

relief. The worshipers went home to their warm firesides and hot dinners, with still greater relief—all glad that it was over!

Think of a church in a Western village of five hundred. It needs paint without and plaster within. The steps are falling to pieces and the yard is cleared of weeds only by the tramping feet of the children of the school on the same block. There is a resident minister, one of four in this town. He has seventy-six members to serve, none of whom is a farmer, so that he has plenty of time on his hands. Instead of rolling up his sleeves and repairing the house of God, he goes off to evangelize in other places. What can he preach about, whose own house of worship is neglected?

The whole edifice used for worship should be reverently made fit for the Lord's presence. It should become the outward form of the Presence, for which the people pray within its walls. An adequate heating-plant should be provided, with ample fuel supply, and the building should in cold weather be heated hours before church time, so as to be comfortable and inviting. The grass should be well clipped, fences repaired and painted, trees not too many. The place of meeting of God's people should be fair to the eye and dear to the memory. It pleads for God all the days under the sun and in the moonlight: not only Sundays, but seven days out of seven. The preacher's doctrine cannot all be preached to the satisfaction of the doubters. Indeed, the divinest truths cannot rest on proof. They appeal to faith. But if they who accept them build and maintain a place of worship that is beautiful and useful,

where the symbols of their faith are to be seen, men will know their sincerity. And if the preacher builds the house, men will believe his sermon.

If religion be an experience of mystery, and if its end is attained in a sense of worth and value, then I think the minister ought to observe the things men live by, the exercises that give them high satisfaction. I was called away from a "bee" in New England, at which ten men and two teams were employed in volunteer service for the improvement of a community house. They were grading and building a terrace. My summons was to the graveyard three miles away, for the burial of a child. I suppose the pitiful occasion opened my heart and eyes. When I came back the teams were idle and the men were so absorbed in some task at one spot that they paid no attention to the passer-by. They had discovered that a massive boulder, which we had assumed we could not move, would respond to levers and crowbars. They had already moved it three feet down the hill and hoisted the heavy end two feet out of its bed.

I stood a moment marveling at the zeal put into the matching of their wits and the power in their hands against that inert mass of rock. The older men had had experience in laying stone walls. They knew what could be done. The younger men shared the excitement of doing.

All were absorbed in a mysterious joy in this triumph over a weight that seemed immovable. Little by little, an inch at a time, they brought the rock to a balance at which they could heave it over to its new place.

Measures that were at first rejected as futile were all used in the intensive attack which forced the great weight along to its conquest. Finally with the help of the neighborhood tractor it was overturned with a great rush and lodged where it would be a foundation instead of an obstruction.

I wondered at the human passion of this incident. I had never seen those men so aroused. Is it not possible that the conquest of nature is still a creative passion that the preacher should interpret? I would have the preacher expound every process men live by, every passion that moves them to construction of good things, as a coöperation with the Almighty. Whatever is recorded in the Bible, every miracle of material construction related there, should be accepted as a working of the Holy Spirit and a fit theme for a preacher to use. May we not find a holy thing in the beautifying and dignifying of American lands, in making them fertile beyond their present measure and in terracing the hills for the sheer joy of the conquest of sterile soil, in foresting the barren mountains, and in restoring to devastated land in America that beauty which we praise and love in the western European countries from which we came? The motives of life are in the hands of the preacher. If the country preacher in the United States should declare the soil holy and preach the creation of God, he would summon the forces which are not at the beck of income or the call of wages. He would bring families from the city instead of sending them, as he now does, from the country; and he would begin to make it a holy land.

CHAPTER XVII

LENGTH OF SERVICE

CONTINUANCE is essential to the soul. No less a part is it of the conception of the family and the community. Life has little worth to a people among whom there is no hope of continuance. The soul aspires to enjoy the power of an endless life, the family needs to call one spot home for a hundred years, and the community should inhabit one hill-top or fertile valley for a thousand years. These are expressions, I suppose, of the sense of the worth of life which is a teaching of all religions.

This ideal of stability is broadly human. The old Mediterranean civilizations had it in the holy ground upon which the family dwelt. The gods of that ground were worshiped at the hearth. The paterfamilias was the head of an unbroken line, a potentate in little, whose authority was in theory absolute, because in him was the token of continuance. Rome was founded upon that idea; and Rome still stands, with lessons to teach unstable America and Australia. China is a nation of villages. Every Chinese citizen is a member of his village; however far he roams, he belongs with his kinsmen. The worth of life to him is in his name, which is the family cognomen of all the men of his village.

If any one of this generation thinks lightly of this ideal of stability, let him remember the World War, one of the causes of which was an excitement of all the cultured peoples of the world over the French foyer, or hearthstone. Deep in the heart of French civilization is this ideal of stability of the household. To-day, years after the World War, the world is still held back from resuming its many businesses by the problem of Reparations; at the center of which is the task of rebuilding the hearths and homes of France, destroyed by the German guns. Younger nations, like our own, profess to regard the place of the home as a matter of relative indifference, but we too are building cities upon continuing sites. Our towns and villages are themselves living forces where they stand to-day. Two generations ago we thought the farm home immortal and buried our dead in the soil consecrated to perpetual ownership by the family. We will come back to the ideal of the immortal farm home in some form comparable to that in which the French and the Chinese cherish it. For it is necessary to the religious feeling of the worth of our life.

Recently the world that reads has been interested in the reports of French families who have lived longest upon their acres. We have looked, with the interest we devote to the great ones of the earth, upon Jean Guais, who has lived, in the direct line of his ancestors, upon the same acres in the department of Maine-et-Loire for six centuries. I remember the wonder and admiration that were aroused in New York State by Edward van

Alstyne, whose family had dwelt at the time of his death upon their farm near Kinderhook, New York, for two hundred and fifty years. There are many farm homes in the Eastern States in which their present owners, fathers and sons, have dwelt for a century. In Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, are farm families who have held title to the land for eight or nine generations. One is not surprised to find these households progressive in agriculture and responsible in support of their churches.

The ministry has been affected in recent decades by the disturbance of the whole of American life and the mobilization of persons or families. In addition to the agrarian causes recited here, there are great changes centering in cities, that have unsettled all men. The great new inventions make possible the employment of many in cities, and their assembling there in vast numbers occasions the creation of a series of amusements which attract even more than the wages. Such is the aspect of change that in two generations, it seems to a writer, "centuries, even millenniums, often separate a metropolis from the country that surrounds it." It appears to the country-born resident of Chicago or Omaha that he has experienced in removal to the city the one great change. Life seems at last to have satisfied its wants. Naturally the ministers of religion, who preach comfort and proclaim the worth of life, are moved by this revolution. Especially during their earlier years ministers regard the city as the terminus of endeavor. They try to get there as early in their

ministry as possible. We are not old enough in our culture to command the best years of a man's life for service away from the city.

The influence of American religion itself is all away from stability. We have our own experience in religion apart from that of western Europe. The Mississippi Valley has been more influential in unsettling the American minister than the shores of the Hellespont or the banks of the Rhine have been to dignify and establish him. The circuit-rider still goes like a headless horseman along American ways, from church to church. The farmers are used to change and have not given serious thought to permanence in the pastorate. Until we acquire as a nation new cravings for peace and freedom, there will be no large place in the United States for a settled pastorate in the country. Yet the promise is growing of a stable country ministry. It appears as an inspiration in the minds of many young men entering the ministry, as a product of the economic prosperity of farmers themselves and as a deliberate plan of the church authorities. Only the last of these remains to be described at this point.

The religious system we have was set up among stable populations of western Europe, and its forms are those of a people who dwell long in their towns. Yet the American population has been on the move for eighty years. New-comers from Europe have been invading the land since 1840; and residents of the land, children of the colonial settlers, have pushed westward since the same date, to the settlement—often not permanent—of new places. Since the date of the discovery of gold in

California, in 1849, residence in the United States has been thought of, by most people, as impermanent. So many have moved that all think of moving rather than of staying. In such a population, churches built for stability have had to adapt themselves to mobility.

American churches now represented in the country are of two classes: the colonial churches, and those of American invention. The colonial were quietly developed in the two hundred years of slow settlement of the Eastern seaboard, from 1609 or 1620 to 1840. Indeed, if one were writing for the whole American experience, he should include in the statement the hundred years of earlier expansion of the Spanish and French Catholics in the sixteenth century, but their settlements have no great concern to the farmers of the United States and they are omitted here. The colonial churches were those founded by countrymen in the territories of the thirteen colonies. Their expansion was slow. The colonies, after the immigration of the early seventeenth century, increased largely by natural growth of the original population. No immigration overwhelmed them such as came to American lands after the year 1840. As the Eastern settlements became congested, families moved westward in small caravans, into the wilderness. The churches that were set up were no other than they had known in the neighborhood of Boston, New York, and Baltimore, and these were identical with the churches of western Europe. These churches are still by name the most representative throughout the land. In the larger immigration of the nineteenth century they have led the van.

The American-made churches are another matter. The number of new sects does not match that of the colonial denominations. But in their forms of organization they have dominated the whole rural field. The city churches adhere generally to the more thorough type of colonial times, which came to us from Europe. But the country people have churches devised by a people on the move, that generally bear European names cherished through colonial days, but are formed on the model of the American-made. The difference between the colonial church and the American-made, though it goes by the same name, is scarcely less than the difference between Catholic and Protestant. The denominations which are unwilling to adapt their forms to the needs of a moving people have suffered by comparison with those which cared less for stability than for numbers.

The history of American rural religion has yet to be written, but some of its outlines are sufficiently known. After the colonial days of slow expansion, possession of the wilderness became a national obsession. Life in the wilderness became a national ideal. Isolation and self-subsistence were made into moral virtues. Ability to resist beasts, human enemies, and the accidents of life, and to care for oneself alone, unassisted by social machinery, took on the character of a new chivalry. Sons of colonial houses elected to join the crusade against the forest and the conquest of the prairies, in much the same spirit as their ancestors followed Peter the Hermit across the Mediterranean, seven hundred years earlier, to the redemption of the Holy Places from the infidels.

In this new chivalry the Indians played the part once acted by Moslems; the Alleghany Mountains presented a barrier like unto the obstacle encountered in that earlier time in crossing the sea. It followed naturally, though unexpectedly, that religious ministers were needed by this population moved by a great ideal. They appeared in the great revival of the years between 1800 and 1830.

The book by Miss Cleaveland descriptive of "The Great Revival" is a paragraph in the annals, as yet uninterpreted by historians, of the American churches. For one cannot understand the rural church in the middle West, where it has its home, without reading the story Miss Cleaveland has begun to write. To read this record of a century and a quarter ago is to recognize the genius and to glimpse the process of the country church of the present time. These revivals stripped religion of all its garments of tradition, laid aside its doctrinal elaboration, divested the ministers of their dignity as pastors, and changed the pastorate to a circuit. The ministers were sent out into the scanty settlements to evangelize. The churches they formed were mere places of heralding, with scantiest organization and none of the machinery for recognition of the State, which had determined the form of European churches. The country churches of the whole land have now, after a century and a quarter of continued instability of their people, settled themselves to these forms of religion which were invented in the first two decades.

The second large and general cause of unsettlement of the country people was the Homestead Act, passed

in the early years of Lincoln's administration, the force of which was released by the termination of the Civil War. The millions of men who had engaged in that struggle required some outlet for their restlessness, in all probability; and they found ready to their hand a law designed to distribute the national domain. Allotments of one hundred and sixty acres were offered to the settler on easy conditions. At once the state of mind of the settled people of the Eastern States was adjusted to the new ideal of homesteading.

The churches which the homesteaders were to use, however, were an afterthought. It was only as a result of a national movement of the older churches, through the boards of home missions of their several denominations, that this afterthought was expressed in houses of worship adapted to the needs of these land-seekers. The religious movement was made national. Railroads already extended across the country, the first in 1869; five more connected the Atlantic and the Pacific by 1890. By that time swift communication between all parts was possible. The minister of the Mississippi and Ohio valleys had before this time been a circuit-rider, without formal supervision. He could now be sent out and salaried by national secretaries who had at command funds supplied by a thousand congregations of prosperous Christians in the East. A national spirit, instead of a mere heralding of the Gospel, prevailed. The evangelization of the whole land and all its people was set before the eyes of the churches. Settlers in remote places expected it. But the church with which they were supplied was still a church of

transition, adapted to the needs of a population on the move.

So long as there was good land to possess under the Homestead Act, settlers went westward to get them a home upon the virgin soil. Many of these, like Richard Garland, moved from one place to a second, and even a third or fourth, in obedience to the restless spirit of a new country. They saw the gold under the Western rainbow and expected to find under prairie soil something better than grasshoppers and debts. They all expected to become gentlemen farmers in a decade; but after many decades they found themselves still moving on toward a goal unattained. For some the habit of moving seems to have taken the place of the instinct of permanence.

By the last decade of that century the word had gone out that the land still in possession of the Government was so inferior as to require investment of capital to insure a crop. At once the land-seekers turned, with heightened interest, to the more desirable lands, and the price of land in the middle West began to rise. Like the lark rising from the ground singing, the goal of the American farmer flew in fascinating circles upward, charming the ear with melody until it was lost to sight. The restlessness of the country people after 1890 is measured by the ascending prices of land, which continued to soar and sing until 1920. So that after twenty years of land-seeking, we had thirty years of land speculation. It would be hard to say which phase was the more disturbing to the farmers' churches, brought first from the staid and permanent villages of

Europe and secondly from the conservative settlements of the Eastern States.

In the land-seeking movement from 1865 to 1890, nine States were settled and admitted to the Union. In the period of speculation from 1890 to 1920, the prices of farm land doubled many times, and by the year last named the price of land had passed far out of sight of limitation by the profit to be gotten from the land. For ten years before the World War, in the experience of farmers possessed of first-grade land in Illinois, the price of the land had been such that with the best of skill they were unable to realize five per cent. upon their investment. Naturally, many of them sold their farms and moved to other States, where a lower price of land gave them interest and wages for the same exertion.

We began in the nineties to exploit the prospects of wealth in the farms by the method of buying and selling farms at an ever higher price. This speculative selling began in the middle West and extended by steady progression, like a wave, until all parts of the country were involved. All American farms were in 1900 supposed by their owners to be for sale. Thirty years of land speculation, between 1890 and 1920, changed the mind of Americans in regard to land. Farm land was, by the alchemy of magical prices that had no basis in the prices of farm products, transmitted into dreams of gold. The only way to get the gold was to sell the land; so men joined the army of farm speculators. Farmers bought and moved, sold, bought another place,

moved to it, and after a year's tillage or more sold it again at a profit, and moved on.

The best measure we have of this instability of the population is the increase in tenancy. Beginning in 1880, when farm tenants were 25.1 per cent. of the whole number of farmers, the proportion increased to 35.3 per cent. in 1900, 38.1 per cent. in 1920. The American farm-renter has come upon us unexpectedly. He has not yet been recognized in the laws of the States or in those of the National Government. Legislators who do not hesitate to enact laws to control bankruptcy, tariffs, obedience to the seventh commandment, and the proportion of alcohol in a farmer's cider, have not yet acted concerning the restlessness of the farm-owner.

In earlier times there were farm-hands in the American farm-houses. But these too are transformed, by the expectation of what magic the farmer may do, into tenants. Not tenants with a lease such as European lands know, who are as stable as owners, but renters of a year, who have no status under the law and desire none. For they also are on the move. They work the rich lands until they can accumulate sufficient capital wherewith to purchase a small place on the cheaper lands. Some renters have bought in the richer sections where renting is profitable, and then have continued to rent lands in addition to those which they own. Measured by monetary gains, the farmer who is "renting additional land" is the best-paid type of American farmer.

Land requires a stable population to till it, if a highly

organized society is to be fed and furnished. The domestic plants and animals, if they are to transmute dust of the earth into the elements of human energy and religious faith, require continuing care by the same person on the same soil. The surplus for the market is provided by selective breeding of plant and beast, that will on that particular soil and in that particular climate and in a given market yield, as return for a given amount of labor and fertilizer, a greater product. These processes of breeding require unbroken attention for years. To build up a herd of Holstein cows that will produce an excess of market milk, without corresponding increase of feed or labor, will require the undivided attention of a farmer for twenty years. To bring a whole farm to produce a large excess of those goods which have a margin of profit will require more than one lifetime. The skill that will accomplish it is not easy to acquire. There is no better way than to inherit it. The best farmer is the son of a farmer and grandson of a settler. In other words, farming is a vital attachment, not a monetary relation to the soil.

Agriculture is a kind of consecration, of such social value that we intrust the farmer with possession of a natural monopoly. Land is of all things on which we put a price the most sacred. Money values are inadequate as measures of its utility, because it is not movable and its potentialities are themselves, in any one year, quite beyond calculation.

There is no land exchange in which the elements of price of land can be precisely estimated by expert brokers, as wheat or cotton can be priced. Its value in

money, therefore, fluctuates in a market attentive to profit alone, so as to defy economic analysis. Human hopes and fears are in it, and sentiments of home love, ideals of moral satisfaction. These cannot be weighed in the same scales as beef or cotton. They require a social measurement because they are a part of the process in which belong love of brothers and love of neighbors—the highest experiences of the human spirit. The love of God is engaged in the feelings which contribute to the price of land.

So that the instability of the rural population in America has religious effects. When a proportion of the members of a rural congregation sell their farms and move away, other families are weakened in their loyalty by the thought of moving. "Decline in population engenders a psychology of defeat." Plans for repairs or for costly investment in church equipment are arrested. All improvements are postponed while the congregation is suffering a loss of supporters. For there is in the Protestant creeds no adequate doctrine of the creative plans and in the churches no codes of conduct that go with those creeds, no restraint upon the individual by reason of his loyalty to his church. When he sells his farm for economic advantage, unrestrained by his religion, he barters away a religious value as well. He sells his church membership and those of his family, actual or potential members of the church, so far as the effect is concerned.

Indeed, he does his church a worse harm than selling it. For the buyer is probably of another faith—so many are the Christian sects—and the acres once tribu-

tary to the church of the farm-owner are now, in all probability, taxed to support another and competing church. Such changes and disturbances of the people whom he serves weaken the spirit of the minister. He too thinks of change. His ambition "for a larger field" of service stirs him to go elsewhere. "A new voice" is what the congregation needs, they think; and so the process of change is idealized. Preacher and people speak pious phrases, dimly realizing their partial insincerity. The ideal of change is a kind of moral indecision between apology and aspiration which weakens the moral fiber of the congregation and arrests its growth by deadly inaction.

For the church is like the land. It requires a stable population for its prosperity. Its process is the slow one of growth. Churches cannot be manufactured. Mechanical measures do not count in their construction, except as useful minor helps. Materials do not make things of the spirit. Materials can embody and conserve the spiritual things; or they may serve as obstacles to the spirit. Those sentiments and states of will which in a democracy compose the churches are easily destroyed by change of human relations. They depend for growth upon permanent family life and continuing neighborhoods.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LARGER PARISH

IN New Jersey there are three Presbyterian churches and a Reformed Church in a row, on a country road three miles and a half in length. The Reformed Church was once a part of one of the Presbyterian churches, so that they may be considered together. The people are of the same type, being neighbors and kinsfolk. One of the churches is in a village of five hundred people; the rest are in the open country. The country population that supports these churches is now being diminished rapidly by the departure of some persons for the towns, and in each of the four churches there are some who believe that they all should get together and form one strong church. With one exception they are all weaker than they were ten years ago.

But the obstacles are many. There are the usual family preferences, kinship connections, and neighborhood antagonisms. Country people are accustomed to say in a case of this sort, "There is a lot of history behind the question." The private interests of prominent church members, the personal fortunes of some of them, who are disposed to maintain old enterprises dear to them, the remembrance of former pastors, the sacred associations that attach themselves to the place where

families have worshiped for generations, where they have buried their dead, where they have had years of profound joy and sorrow—these all are in the way. But they would seem to be insufficient reasons for halting an enterprise of such obvious worth.

The union of these churches would seem practicable; but it has no force behind it, because no one of them has a program different from the other. Each is a church of preaching, worship, Sunday-school teaching, and activities of a women's and a young people's society. They are all of the same pattern. They differ a little in size and in the amount of work done or number of worshipers assembled. The abilities of the ministers differ, but they are all preachers. The zeal of the members for the church differs, but they are all doing the same things. The program is one that expresses religion in words. For this program a small church is better than a big one. A small church enjoys an intensity of fellowship that a big one lacks. Each member has in this scanty, meager program a place that he can fill. The activities which are necessary to carry on a teaching program are ushering, the collection of money, the routine care of property, the conducting of occasional social meetings, and the giving of church dinners. There may be once a year a gathering of larger size. For a program so simple as that the few leading members of a small church are sufficient. It is better that churches which prefer to be of this sort be small, so long as they can get a preacher and keep going.

The church in the country has always been limited

by the boundaries of mutual acquaintance of neighbor with neighbor. Men are willing to go to church with those whom they meet weekly. The country churches have not hitherto been so extended as to include persons outside the neighborhood. It may be a geographic neighborhood, a trading neighborhood, a kinship group, or a population having a common language. But whatever the boundaries of the small neighborhood based upon universal acquaintance, the church has not, as a rule, grown beyond it.

If the first factor in neighborliness is acquaintance, the second is geographic nearness. This circumstance is prior to acquaintance and a cause of it, but I have put the two in the order they have in the rural mind. Propinquity necessitates acquaintance. Let us look, then, at the geographic factor. Studies of it have been made in recent years. Whatever the term "neighbor" may mean to philosophers, for farmers it carries with it always the idea of physical propinquity. It connotes the persons and families who live within easy driving distance, or who by the habits of marketing, going to school or to church or lodge, are imbedded in that affection which dwells not in sentiment but in duty.

I do not know who began the study of communities as land-areas. The idea is old enough. The country parish used not to be a selected membership, but was made up of all persons dwelling upon a certain area of land. So we began to survey the churches in Pennsylvania and Illinois, in 1910, as they stood related to the people of a township and later those in Tennessee as they were located in a magisterial district. A little

later C. J. Galpin made his more precise analysis [1] of the "trade-basin" of the village and its surrounding farms, a study as suggestive as it has been useful. It was used in the interchurch studies of country churches, under the direction of E. de S. Brunner, for the delimiting of the parish. The study of the neighborhood has been pressed farther by J. H. Kolb [2] at the University of Wisconsin, who has demonstrated that country people are bound together by services rendered one another. These successive studies taken together constitute a beginning of the understanding, in terms of measurement, of the rooting of the farmer's life in the area of land with which he is as a neighbor associated.

Upon this area of land his church must stand, and to it the services to be rendered by his church belong. The farmer's church is already seeking for a land basis, as in the last generation it sought for a confessing membership. As it ceases to be controversial and partakes of a spirit irenic instead of polemical, it will ever more clearly see its relation to the land, to the beasts and plants that live upon the land, and to the human souls whose character is given them in large part by the community. We have already many churches that may claim to be community churches. The greater number of them are denominational. And beyond these the denominations possess surely as many more, in which the fact of relation to a certain area and to its people is in

[1] "Rural Life," Charles Josiah Galpin. Century Co. 1918.

[2] "Rural Primary Groups," J. H. Kolb. University of Wisconsin Bulletin. See also "Service Relations of Town and Country," Ibid.

evidence though they do not profess it. Then outside denominations are "community churches," whose existence is justified by their ideal of serving the people who dwell upon an area of land. So that it is evident country churches are already favorable to the idea of serving all within a geographical boundary.

The active social spirit of our time is at work defining the rural community, in ways that will have interest to church people when the results are more mature. Communities are formed out of hand by public-service corporations, by the government mail service, and by the public schools. The telephone was early appropriated by farmers. Central stations had to be provided. So the companies described an area around each telephone "central" in which all the users of telephones should be served from that central station. Often in the Eastern States a central station serves several towns. The unit may be only so large as will be served efficiently in the erection of lines, in their repair and maintenance, and in the service of calls. The telephone community is larger or smaller, according as the population is denser or more dispersed, as the roads are good or impassable, and as the business of the company is great or small. A church administrator may well study the telephone central and ask himself whether the future Protestant church might not be organized upon a basis as broad, with a technique as flexible and responsive.

The rural mail is delivered upon an area equally expansive. Its radius must be no longer than a daily journey of motor- or horse-drawn vehicle. The state of the roads must be considered. The needs and de-

mands of the people must be a determinant. Yet the Government has a system that works, delivering to all in the communities—as its own maps in the Washington office define them—a daily service. Again, could the service of rural religion be organized upon as broad a basis and give to all who dwell within its boundaries the comforts and warnings of the Gospel? The present system of small parishes may be said at the best to reach the individual farm-house less often than once a month. Would it be too much to hope that a rural parish, if it were centered at the hub of the telephone community, or at the distributing office of the rural-mail delivery, could by a system of visitation touch every farm-house once a week? To do so would revolutionize American religious life. But are Americans ready for a religion of service and use, to take the place of that religion of opinions and theories they have so long held in esteem?

The public-school authorities also have created their communities. They no longer approve the one-teacher school. The consolidated school with its elaborate building and its diversified instruction by an organized staff of teachers not less than four in number, appeals to their judgment more. In some States this type of school, which was conceived in Ohio, has taken the place of the simpler form of school dear to our fathers and "good enough" for most farmers. The district of the consolidated school is not identical with that of the telephone, nor with the routes of the mail-carriers. It is in well-settled farming country a district of about ten miles' diameter. In the Western lands

thinly settled its longest radius is often ten or even twenty-five miles; but this is unusual. The limit is again in the goodness of the roads at all seasons and the endurance of the children, who cannot bear too long a ride before and after the hours in the school-room. There are many religious leaders who have seized upon the consolidated school district as the proper physical basis of the church parish. They declare that there should be only one church in a district.

It is undoubtedly true that the country community is of larger area than it was when most of the farmers' churches we know were organized. Neighbors are both more numerous and more dispersed. Especially is this true in mountainous regions. In the remoter country places families used to be limited to those who lived in the valley or along a certain road; but now the greater facility of acquaintance by reason of better communications and the dispersion of families and friends over a widened residential area have increased the area of the community. Friends and kinsmen used to be within call on foot. They are now within twenty miles. So that one of the bonds that unite people in churches is lengthened. The larger parish is made possible.

The story of the beginnings of this new conception has been often told. So far as I know the pioneers were Harlow S. Mills [3] in Michigan and Silas E. Persons in New York. As becomes ministers of religion, they re-

[3] "The Larger Parish," Harlow S. Mills. Missionary Education Movement, New York. Also the pamphlets by Malcolm Dana, published by the Congregational Home Missionary Society, New York.

ceived from an inner moving their inspiration for this bold act of formal enlargement of the conventional parish; but about that time the elements of their conception had been in many minds less fertile and constructive. Never was a proposal more timely. It has been the source of many imitations in the years since it was broached at Benzonia and Cazenovia.

The practical mind of Dr. Malcolm Dana has directed the rural church work of the Congregational churches during recent years along this line alone. It is possible that he has seized upon the solution of the difficulties of the farmer's church. Long ago Professor G. F. Warren of Cornell University declared that as the most necessary adjustment of the church to the industrialized farmer a church should minister to people dwelling upon an area large enough to support an efficient establishment. He declared that New York farmers had not sufficient income[4] to support many small churches and advised that the area of pastoral care be greatly extended in the interest of more efficient service and better financial support.

The instances of larger-parish organization that may be cited are drawn from outlying States. It may be doubted whether at present the more thickly settled States would consent to the obliteration of the many small conventicles, dear as they are to farmers by sentiment and remembrance, and the magnifying of central churches at points at which the rural mail is distributed or the rural telephone is centered. The Roman Catholic churches are so organized in general, but Protestants

[4] "Farm Economics," G. F. Warren. Macmillan. 1913.

would effectually protest. In the sections, however, in which the church has never been firmly established, as western Colorado, or in which it has already decayed by the natural inability of the people to support many churches, as parts of Maine, it is possible to organize farm families upon the larger radius. Dr. Malcolm Dana has so organized Montrose and Collbran, Colorado. There two ministers serve a ranching population over a radius of ten miles and the result is satisfactory. In each place a minister and two assistants render service not only at the center, at which they live, but in every "basin" in which their people live. They offer in the school-houses a regular moving-picture service, in every section a recreational program; and in every section, also, a Sunday-school and a church are brought near to the people. Church membership has grown and the people's attitude toward the church has changed from indifference to glad support. Men who were asked to canvass for the church budget had accepted, one of them saying, "It is no longer embarrassing to canvas for the church in Plateau Valley."

At Lingle, Wyoming, and in the two neighboring small congregations of Veteran and Fort Laramie, with smaller places tributary, there has been organized the Goshen Hole Larger Parish. The Rev. Harry E. Bicksler, at Lingle, is the presiding pastor, and the Rev. George Woodard and the Rev. A. A. Fonken, in the other fields, combine their services with his in the pastoral care of a section of irrigated lands and semi-arid ranch-lands, the radius being ten to twenty miles. Each of these men has his own independent parish,

and a combined effort is made in evangelistic, social, and educational work. They coöperate also in village beautification. Mrs. Fickett, a trained social worker, coöperates with all three pastors in certain functions, serving especially the women on the ranches and the children.

The best example of the larger parish known to me in an Eastern State is that in Warren County, New York. The smaller churches in a part of this county have fallen into disuse, but at Glens Falls are strong and vigorous churches of all denominations, the wealth and leadership of the county being congregated there. Over a segment of the county, therefore, the Presbyterian Church in Glens Falls has assumed responsibility. The assistant minister, Mr. Twitchel, maintains services of worship in six of these, with congregations of four of the greater communions. He visits the families, organizes their religious activities, and gives especial attention to maintaining the church properties. Where a congregation is alive, he fosters it. His own salary is paid from the funds of his own church, of which Dr. J. Lyon Caughey is pastor; and to that church go all benevolent gifts, as well as all accessions of membership, except in the case of a preference for the rural church. The result has been excellent for a term of five years.

I believe that the basis of the farmer's church must continue to be the acquaintance derived from residence upon the same area of land, marketing in the same place, and use of the same schools. It would seem that with the broadening of areas of social intercourse the area

of religious activity should be enlarged. It remains for able and far-seeing ministers to organize the religious service of country people upon a scale suitable to the experience of modern life and to the extending sympathies of farmers. We have the greater areas. The machinery of wider organization is offered. Only the ministers are lacking who love the land and the life of the people well enough to travel country roads with the tidings of heaven.

In the Northern and Eastern States the country minister is a pastor and lives within the same acquaintance area as the people do. But in the West and the Southwest no pastorate was established in the settlement of the country. The ministers have until recently been "on circuit." They now live in the villages and towns, away from the open-country churches they serve; but in any case they range over a wider acquaintance than their people enjoy. They have to do so in order to get a living by the Gospel and they have idealized this habit of freedom. They take pride in the friends they have in many places, they boast of the fact that their particular church is supported by the best people in each community to which they go; the reason being that their own acquaintance in any place is limited to the persons who entertain them. These persons are the most substantial members of the congregation, so the minister has the impression that the occasional banker and school principal are representative of the church, to which he goes for the sole purpose of preaching.

There is in the "circuit system" of the middle West

no promise of a larger parish. The wider acquaintance of the minister is productive of no organized unity among the churches. In fact, it tends to intensify the competition between neighboring churches. He does not serve the people of any area, but selected lists of persons. For these ministers, living in the towns, exploit the country churches to their own advantage. The process of which they are a part is a predatory one. It goes by competition. Each man is working for himself and expecting to "seek a larger field soon." It follows that, if small churches are to be combined in larger parishes, the old system of non-resident, part-time preaching must be done away with.

Some ministers have enlarged the parish by securing a motor-bus for the purpose of bringing children and those who have no vehicles from remote parts of the neighborhood to the church and Sunday-school services. This service should be rendered by any large parish, but in itself is only a reinforcement of the church's program of teaching. The essential element in the large parish in the country must be a social program, which enriches the life of the people in a wide area but concentrates at one center the benefits of organization, of extensive financial contribution, and of rare personality.

The possibility of the extension of a country parish is at the present time limited by two conditions. First, the ability and disposition of the minister. If he is ready to travel far, to seek out all the people in an area extending without interruption from the church to the country round for a radius of about ten miles at the

farthest; if he is willing to make all these people his own, to study their needs, and to devote himself to their service; and if he has the ability to assemble them at a central point as well as to distribute valued services to them at their local centers, with wisdom and discretion, then his contribution is made.

The second condition of a larger pastorate is financial. It is not enough to say that ministers should go into the country: there must be an adequate, dignified, effective way of paying the bills for this large plan. It is questionable whether families at a distance can be persuaded to contribute effectively to a long-distance service centering in a meeting-house of another neighborhood. There must be discovered in the country, therefore, centers of religious work whose people are willing and able to finance the larger-parish service, and in these families there must be a readiness to give their means to a work beneficial not only to themselves but to others. It is my opinion that we are ready for this now in the farming areas of the middle West, of the Pacific coast, and of the mountain and prairie States. I do not think that people in the South are prepared for it. The colonial States of the East, which have always had the tradition of a rural pastorate, are ready.

And to be ready means this: that the minister who loves farmers and desires a kingdom of his own will be supported in the country. If he has fair ability and knows how to get his way with men, he will have no difficulty in putting through a program of combination of small units in the country and of securing the support for it.

In the third place, the general solution of this question must await the arousal of village and town people in the regions I have named; for only in these centers do the neighborly interests of the open country meet. In the village is found a sufficient nucleus of wealthy families and in these smaller towns there dwell generally persons of experience and intelligent leadership. It is therefore possible for a village or a town to maintain a broad area of service.

Indeed, the great overchurching of the village, which is known to every student of the country church, is a consequence of plans for rural service. In the beginning of each church in the village, its founders said that it was to serve the farmers. With the passage of time, and because there is no common control, these churches, obedient to a spirit which prevails in the American village, have forgotten the farmer; and now we have in the Central States, where villages are most in evidence, a surplus of churches in the villages, attended, as a rule, by few or no farmers. They are too many, they compete with one another, they have no program to match the zeal and efficiency of the bank or general store beside which they stand.

The first cause of village conservation in religion is the frequency of change in the ministerial force. No program can survive the influence of pastors who expect to stay one year and remain on the average but two. The new minister coming in receives as a rule nothing from the old. The perspective through which the minister in a brief pastorate looks upon his work is foreshortened; it ends with the farthest village house

and the beginning of the country road. In parts of the United States almost no village pastors go near the farmer. They know nothing about him and some of them care less.

Another cause of conservatism is the condition extensively shown in "The Little Town,"[5] namely, that the village is the place of residence of many small persons. It is possible for men of very limited income to live in a village. The outer edge of the village affords house sites where ground rent is a trifle. Construction of houses is inexpensive and living expenses are low. Supplies of food are easy to secure, and there is for almost every villager some means of income. He lives between trade and agriculture and he can depend upon either. Dr. Douglass discovered the lowest levels of income in the agricultural population in villages.

The predominance of women in villages also is a cause of conservatism, for their range of vision is narrower than that of men, their efficiency in detail much greater. The farming industry has not been made attractive to women by the experience of the last fifty years, so that the influence of the surplus women in the villages is thrown into the scale against service of the people on the farms by the ministers.

So that the case of the larger parish must rest for the present in the experience of a few of the larger, bolder towns, in the example of a limited number of foresighted pastors, and in the promotive energies of national church leaders.

[5] "The Little Town," H. Paul Douglass. Macmillan. 1919.

CHAPTER XIX

THE EFFICIENT CHURCH

WE have had many proficient country workers. Rural work throughout the United States has been a series of emotional explosions, each depositing a form of religious life. Some of these forms are genuinely religious and some are not; but all of them have to be maintained. We have been forced in recent years by the necessities of economy, if for no other reason, to test the church in the country by its efficiency, and to raise the question whether or not, in common parlance, the church is making good. This is a disturbing question, unwelcome to a devotional spirit and repugnant to the sentimentalist who looks upon the country church as the place where he received many blessings. The farmer's church is enshrined in sentiment, and to raise the question of its efficiency is to hurt the feelings of not a few.

In my office twelve years ago, we planned social surveys, in response to calls for help from Presbyterians of my own church who were confused as to the value and anxious about the future of their rural congregation. About the same time the Rev. C. O. Gill, prompted by the Hon. Gifford Pinchot, was surveying churches in Vermont, as to their attendance, membership, and contri-

butions. My office adopted as a test of efficiency the standard that prevails in Protestant churches most widely, namely, accessions on confession of faith. Without variation this has been the test applied in the surveys made since that time, culminating in the pamphlet "Church Growth and Decline in Ohio," by Herman N. Morse, and the book "The Town and Country Church in the United States," by Morse and Brunner. The studies made by Mr. Gill have appeared in his two volumes.[1] These studies are pursued to the limit of their meaning by Luther Fry in his "Diagnosing the Country Church."

If there is a defect in these tests of efficiency, and in the studies based on them, it must be remembered that before they were made no one had attempted to measure the workings of the religious spirit or to weigh the value of religious activity. The field is clear now for raising the questions: "What is an efficient church? What attainments should we expect from a congregation that worships God in obedience to Jesus Christ as a Divine Master?" I have acknowledged elsewhere that the national church bodies can be expected to render a service that is valuable and necessary, but they cannot be expected to produce the result we need from a church.

What, then, is an efficient church? This question must be answered in terms of American and modern Christianity. The confusion under which ministers labor is caused by the attempts to answer it in terms of mystical experience, historical episodes long since

[1] "The Country Church" (1914) and "Six Thousand Country Churches" (1920), C. O. Gill and Gifford Pinchot. Macmillan.

closed, racial prejudices that ought not to control, and controversial doctrines which contribute nothing to efficiency. A church efficient in the eyes of Americans will be one that grows in numbers, more than 10 per cent. per year; that makes an impression such as Jesus Christ would make upon all the people of the natural community surrounding it; that renders service to the marginal people of the natural community, like unto that which Christ rendered to the poor; that regenerates individual character and enlists persons for the Christian ministry; and, last of all, a church that influences moral standards both private and civic. It is taken for granted that this efficiency will be denominational, or, if not, that the congregation will adhere to a religious type generally approved.

If I seem to exalt over much the judgment of American public opinion, my first reason is that we do not any longer have to choose between the tradition of Rome in Italy, Geneva in Switzerland, The Hague in Holland, or Plymouth in England, as to the efficiency of the church. We are responsible for our own American judgment, just as they were when they formed the Catholic, Presbyterian, Reformed, Methodist, or Congregational standards of efficiency. My second reason is that Americans are very pragmatical. While they are tolerant of traditions so far as names go,—in fact, they expect a church to conform to their conception of Christianity,—religion is alive in America and we are living to-day. We cannot escape the test of the present generation. Efficiency in religion is a conception of the present time.

Why should a church grow? Growth in numbers is the standard commonly required by denominations. It is a true standard. We are a young nation undergoing changes that swiftly alter the distribution of our population. In every community where there is a church there are families moving in and out. There is a competitive system which implies that some of these churches will perish and others will survive. We expect a church that claims support and public respect to gain and not to lose under such conditions. Even in a diminishing community it is possible for a church to make at least a gross gain. Our earlier surveys show that a church failing to make a ten-per cent. gain in the average year is losing ground. "For the country as a whole just about every other church maintained an average gain of 10 per cent., which it is generally considered is about the lowest average gain that offers real security for the future of a church in areas subject to such extensive movements of population."[2]

The first test of efficiency is to evangelize the community. To this end, the Sunday-school is the available agent in most cases. Good evangelists are few, and their maximum performance is rarely attained. The safest and most productive way of winning families and individuals to church membership is through the Sunday-school. The Sunday-school is the modern exponent, in non-liturgical churches, of catechetical instruction, which is as old as Christianity. It suits the American spirit. The Sunday-school is a society: its educational attainments are very meager. It is to be understood

[2] "The Town and Country Church," Morse and Brunner.

best as a cluster of age-group societies which attract the young into relations with the church, and win them to Christian confession, establishing them in intelligent convictions. To say that it does little in education is not to depreciate it. If it is an inefficient school, it is an efficient evangel.

Sunday-schools should be graded even when they are very small, but for the purpose of grading they should be assembled in large units. An efficient church ought to have at least one hundred in the Sunday-school, to do good work. Therefore, I do not hesitate to advocate the consolidation of Sunday-schools for purposes of grading. Some form of written questions should be used in the adult classes; picture-work, hand-work, and practical art should be offered to the little children.

The Daily Vacation Bible School is an extension of the Sunday-school work to the week-day in the summer. It is adapted to the vocation of the day-school, as the Sunday-school should generally be to the grades of the public school. Grading and routine, as used in the public school, rightly determine those of the Sunday-school. The Daily Vacation Bible School offers to children an elaborate system of hand-work along with services of worship, exercises in song, memorizing of Scripture, and a joyous fellowship. One pastor asserts that having once used the Daily Vacation Bible School method, he has adopted it as the basis of his year's work in the church. This is simply to say what I have said before in other words: that the religious teaching of children such as is done in the Sunday-school is the best kind of evangelism.

But churches ought solemnly to approach a season of revival every year. It seems to me that the pastor neglects his duty who fails to summon the whole community at least once a year to a reconsideration of the Christian way of life. Let the church unite with as many other congregations as possible and employ the best preacher to be secured; but let no church fail to solicit the attention of every one in the community to the essential problems of personal religion and to the duty of every man to give his heart to personal obedience to Jesus Christ in public confession of his faith. One reason for periodic revival effort is found in the seasonal experience of life, which moves us every year through a scale of emotion and of will, in the peculiar emotional habits of Americans and in the nature of religion itself, which occupies a commanding place in human life. It comes into consciousness and into volition only on rare occasions. Such occasions return annually as Easter returns with the spring season.

Another reason is that adolescents, once in their lives, are prepared to face religious decision, with eyes wide open, and to determine their answer to certain supreme religious questions. In the community, therefore, there ought to be every year an opportunity to register such decisions. Men do not live at their highest all the time, but they must not be permitted to evade the supreme decisions of life on those rare occasions on which the claims of obedience to the Almighty may be offered to them. There are many persons in every community, probably about one third of the total number, who evade social obligation; they can be awakened only by sweep-

ing the whole field of social life with an imperative disturbance. This is what a revival is. Let the church decide how it will revive the community, but let it not omit to do so.

The second test of efficiency of the church might be described as publicity. I do not like the word, but most people do. It means that the church should take measures to make itself known. Religion is not a thing to be ashamed of: there was no meanness of spirit about Christ or His apostles. Prophetic spirit cannot be suppressed. It claims the attention of every one. It will not be rebuffed or ignored. Moreover, worship itself is a public interest. If the priest is too diffident to make it public, the profane person is not. He has no doubts, but has an opinion about worship and expresses it freely. Therefore, every church ought to make itself universally known. There are various ways of doing this, and we must not be impatient of the bad taste exhibited by some churchmen, such as wearing long hair, affecting a clerical garb, praying in the streets, or erecting a blazing cross on the church steeple, or maintaining a vulgar attack upon vulgar amusements such as dancing. Such methods of attracting attention have questionable religious value, it is true; but if the minds of men are challenged by them, and the congregation is satisfied with the publicity they secure, we must leave the results to be tested under other standards of efficiency. The main objective is to compel all men in the natural community to know that the church is there.

I like better the methods of an annual visitation to every house in the area around the church; a monthly

letter from the church to every family in the natural community; a letter from the pastor to every individual whose birthday he can ascertain, if he has a proper right to congratulate the person on that occasion; a reading-notice in the papers circulated in that community; an engaging announcement posted conspicuously before the church, and frequent events maintained by the church, of such character that the community must needs have an interest.

Efficient publicity is secured by all the work of a church, but my contention is that the minister and his people must lay off their diffidence, put away the self-conscious snobbery of believing that there is virtue in small numbers, or religious value in meekness and meanness, and stand before the public as representatives of a great public interest. Let the minister recognize that he is an ambassador of the greatest Power in the world; and when he comes before the public, let him and his people comport themselves as possessing a right to public attention. There is a balance between personal meekness and public prominence which a church ought to maintain. Let a country minister study the traffic policeman in a city street for an hour: he will be healed of his false diffidence and learn how fit and how happy is the man who adorns a public service with the gesture and posture of a public responsibility.

It is quite possible to be so modest as to be called to sit higher up and, at the same time, to claim the attention of all. For instance, the church at Novato, California, recently invited the Catholic Church in the community to a combined meeting in the community

house for the raising of funds for a Christmas celebration. The whole community was at once enlisted. The entertainment of the evening was memorable: a speech was made for the Protestants, by a learned man of their faith from a near-by town, and one for the Catholics by one of their numbers. A substantial fund was raised and evenly divided between the two churches of the community, the Catholic and the Presbyterian. An interesting event of the evening was the demand that the Presbyterian pastor make a speech. He had made all the arrangements for this conspicuous attack on public attention on behalf of the churches, but he had omitted to put himself on the program. When he was called to the platform he received an ovation.

Father Kelly, sent as Roman Catholic priest to a town near Chicago, found that the people of the community hated Catholics. His own church had only about thirty members in the village, and during his brilliant pastorate there—which culminated in a popularity so universal that he was offered nomination and election as State senator, by the reigning boss in politics, and his successor was elected mayor—his membership was never substantially increased. He had thirty when he came and about thirty when he departed five years later.

Upon his arrival Father Kelly called upon the other clergymen of the community, and visited all the families in the place, in order to assure them, he said, that he "had not horns and a tail." Then he celebrated St. Patrick's Day with a dinner instead of a dance, because the dinner conformed to local standards and the dance did not. He devoted himself to community interests.

He demanded tolerance for his church rather than labored for the conversion of Protestants. He held a weekly service, open to all, in order to explain what Catholics believed. He was amused at being told by the first non-Catholic who attended these popular services, that he "came to see the holy smoke." This devoted pastor made his church known to all the people. When he was about to depart, the Protestants collected a fund, to which they permitted no Catholic to contribute, and therewith purchased him a gold watch. I am convinced that unless the Protestant Church is favorably known to all Catholics, it falls short of evangelizing the community. For one cannot conceive of Jesus Christ living his life and performing his mission without being known to all the religious parties of his time.

As a third test, the efficient church will reach the marginal people of the community. Those are they who are on the edges of life. People about to die are marginal, for their lives are in jeopardy; so that a minister will visit the sick not because they are his church members but because they are in danger of death. He will regularly go down the aisles of the county hospital, and speak to every patient a word of cheer and comfort. He will know how to behave himself at a sick-bed. My belief is that he will do well to acquire a technique for sickness and death rather than to trust to his wits and to his sense of humor, as too many Protestant ministers do. The liturgical churches are wise in furnishing their pastors with a formal ritual for ministry to the sick and to the dying.

Young people are on the margin of life, and they sorely need the attention of the church. Family discipline is poor, and always was poor. Parents are chosen for their high office not by their proficiency as teachers but by biological proficiency. It is useless to complain of the "neglect of the family altar"; it never was generally observed; much less universal. The church has the duty, which the family never exercised, of caring for the adolescent; the Sunday-school is not enough. Young men and women want to play as well as to learn; their social meetings should be encouraged and guided. The church building should have suitable equipment, not only such as the ladies want for cooking and eating together, but what the boys and girls want for meeting and loitering together under good auspices, for getting acquainted, and for laying those foundations of life which include marriage.

The Rev. J. H. Gruver at Reems Creek, North Carolina, proposed that his manse be enlarged in order that his wife, an invalid, might, although confined to the house, serve as chaperon for the meetings of young people. The Rev. Paul E. Doran, in the open country near Sparta, Tennessee, has followed the same principle, and attached to his residence a big room for community meetings of the young people. These are instances of provision, despite the utmost parsimony of means, for sheltering the young within the church. They suggest the imperative necessity that the church care for young women and men when they are in jeopardy of their lives, when their character is on the margin of the community's approval.

The efficient church will render services to the poor who are without land or tools. Such people are dependent upon the community. Therefore the church ought to have a wise industrial approach. The tenant farmer in the country should be preferred to the owner, in the attention bestowed by the church through its leaders. What is done for the tenant and the hand will reach the whole community. There is an indirection of attack which a church should prefer; for indirect action is the true channel of religion. A pastor in the Kansas wheat country, seeing the despised migrants who throng the towns at harvest-time, seeking employment, reorganized the facilities of the community to shelter these men. They were sleeping on the grass in front of the court-house. He got them a room within the building. He found shelters for them in the basement of the churches. He opened the town hall for their entertainment. Throughout the whole wheat country, in the face of the general custom of ignoring these men on whom the harvesting of the wheat depends, his example made a profound impression. It commended the church to owners and to public officials. To them the harvest hands had seemed merely "a menace"; to him these men were first objects of the church's care.

The efficient church, in the fourth place, will regenerate individuals. I do not now mean convert them; nor do I by the expression "regenerate" refer to the mysterious act of God, which is not under the control of any church, by which a soul is mysteriously changed from sinner to saint. I have in mind the power of the

congregation to make a man stand on his own feet and be somebody. It was my highest satisfaction as a pastor to see the change in individual characters, wrought by membership in my church in some instances, more often by election to a responsible position and the performance of a public trust in the church. Every church produces its own type of men, we are told, but a church that has developed only a crabbed old deacon, zealous to suppress and to obstruct, can hardly be called a success. The especial efficiency of a Protestant church, with its flexible system of electing officers and employing individuals, should take form in the discovery of many kinds of men who can perform public service and take pride in it.

This is the use of the church organization. It ought to be more widely extended than it is. I remember well breaking down the prejudice of a church I served, in which no man had been elected to office before that time who could not lead in prayer. We had one man who gave the church his service as a carpenter and we elected him to the highest church office we had. He became an elder, than which we have no higher honor. He never had much to say except about practical things, materials, the value of the day's work, repairs, and the proper use of church buildings, but upon these subjects he became our authority. We had a high-church theory of the sacredness of the building, and he became our priest in the use of sacred materials.

We had another man who was gifted in business transactions, but could rarely be persuaded to mumble a

prayer in public, though he did his best. Him, too, we elected to be one of our elders and he sanctified the office, because in that church we were experiencing a consecration of incomes to the Lord. It seems to me that every church ought to be a place for making good citizens, honest lawyers, and devout scholars. If so, the church must broadly consider the evangelizing of all sorts of lives and the development of personal character in many human callings that have worth and are necessary to the commonwealth.

The efficiency of the church ought to express itself in the call of some to the Christian ministry. This is an old test, but a good one. If the church cannot reproduce itself, it is sterile and barren. Priests are necessary if there are to be parishioners, and prophets must be called by God's Spirit if there are to be congregations. Indeed, the prophetic spirit is necessary to the continuance of the democratic State, so that a church among farmers must not forget its highest office—to "send men into the ministry," and women too. For now the woman has an enlarging place in Christian work, in charity organization, in health service, and in religious education. The divine call will not be heard in a congregation that is popularly organized, unless in the heart of the church is a group of praying people, and in the service of the church there is a profound spirit of worship. The church may be broad as you please, but unless it is profoundly moved to worship, I do not think it will send its sons into religious callings. Is it too much to ask that, once in every ten

years, out of the experiences of a church of two hundred members, there should be one young man or one young woman moved with a divine call to a religious vocation?

The efficient church will provide the community with moral sanctions. American churches are so prone to do this that I will not expand upon it. We like to dominate, and a spirit of Moses, the law-giver, is abroad in the land. It is well that it should be so, because we Americans are a new people, not long out of serfdom and slavery, and we sorely need at least ten new Commandments. We are getting them rapidly. The American church is, moreover, turning its mind toward international standards of morality. The splendid service rendered by the churches in foreign missions has prepared us for this day of international discussion. We have many advocates in high places of the moral sanctions proper to a nation about to serve as a leader among the people of the world, and a nation resolved to abstain from national greed or imperial domination. This is the great duty before the churches of America, in obedience to the spirit of Moses. If we can only magnify the place of the church in its relation to the conscience and make less than we now do of dictation by the church to law-givers, we shall serve efficiently the needs of the time.

The seventh kind of efficiency is denominational. I am convinced, after observing many congregations, that nothing is gained by mongrelizing the Methodist church with independency, or adulterating Baptist

efficiency by the control by a bishop. The best thing a church can do is to be what it professes. Therefore a congregation ought to serve the communion to which it belongs; or, if it be an independent church, it should sturdily exercise its freedom. Having launched upon a career, it ought to have pride and self-respect enough to go on to the end. Denominations are the best religious agencies we have at the present time. We cannot administer our work now in the light of the past, which is dead and gone; or of the future, which is little more than guesswork. Every congregation ought to do its duty by its own genius.

This means that it ought to pay strict attention to the electing of officers, and transacting business at the annual meeting, which is customary in the great majority of Protestant churches. It ought to obey and conform to the usual requirements of the organization to which it belongs. The minister should learn to answer letters; church officers should be patiently trained to perform the duties assigned them.

None of the great communions actually forbids its church to be efficient in the community. Every one of them proposes to make its congregation serve the people in developing personal character, in the time bestowed upon exercises of the church, in the breadth of mind and the lively sympathies with which they respond to the spirit of Christ, in use of the missionary proposals of their national leaders. The definitions we inherit are simple, and I know of no communion in the United States that might not reinforce its members in what

Micah proposed: "To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"; or what Saint James, the brother of our Lord, taught: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," and to keep oneself "unspotted from the world."

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